

# Broadcast News Coverage of Asylum April to October 2006: Caught Between Human Rights and Public Safety

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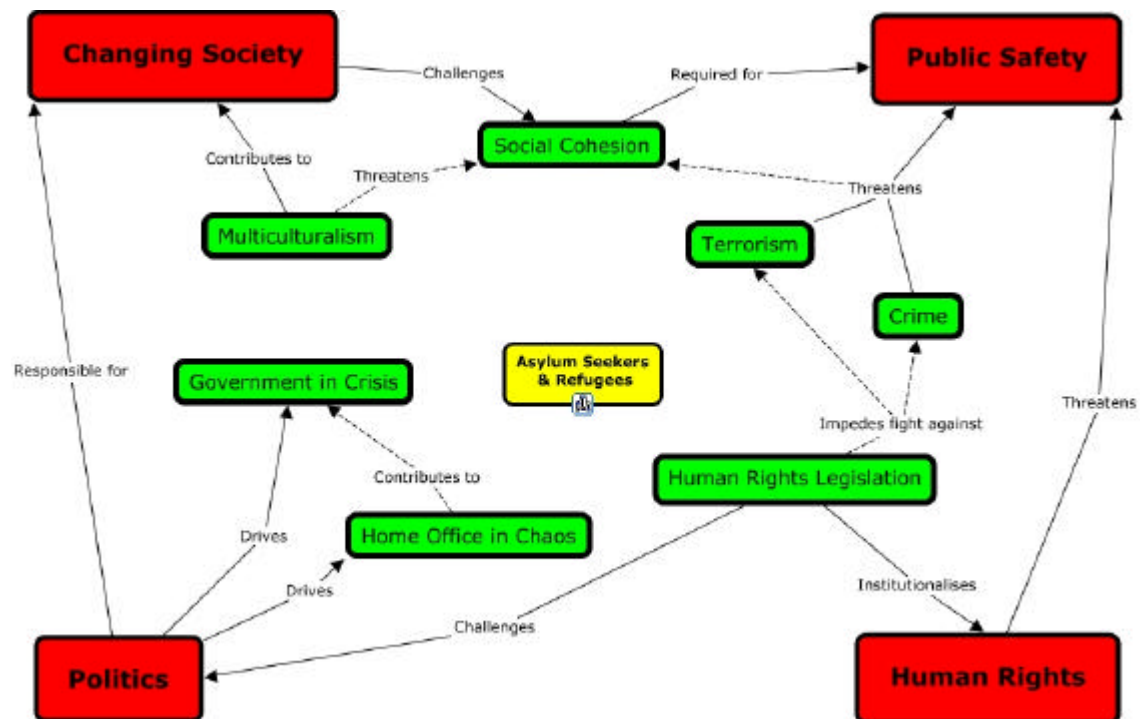
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## Key Findings

Asylum seekers and refugees are rarely the focus of coverage during the six months covered by this report. Journalists, however, mention them on a regular basis in a number of different contexts. Across the two concept maps (for map 1 see opposite page, for map 2 see Appendix ) included here, the links between the themes, topics, and events, which make up these contexts, spin a complex conceptual network around 'asylum seekers and refugees'. But asylum is not so much actively part of the weave as caught in the centre. As the direction of the arrows in the concept maps indicates, 'asylum seekers and refugees' are affected by and subjected to the key events, dominant themes and main concepts of the coverage, but they exert no influence on them. Even the journalists have relatively little influence: they strengthen and solidify the net through their reporting; but they do not control it. Caught in this web of apparently common-sense, but powerfully mediated understandings of asylum seekers and refugees, the journalists themselves are unable to escape its limits and its limitations.

### ***Key Findings: Media Content***

- *Asylum* is rarely the main focus of reporting or news during the six months monitored. *Asylum* is, however, regularly mentioned in news stories focussing on other topics. Thematically it is mainly covered in terms of the asylum system and deportation
- 'Negative' words are much less in evidence. However there appears to be no need any longer to use negative words because the word *asylum* now connotes negativity and is still constantly embedded in a network of negative contexts.
- There is still confusion about terminology regarding the legal status of immigrants and the various different categories. There is also some uncertainty about when it is appropriate to 'label' individuals in terms of their immigration status.
- There is confusion too about the difference between *criminal justice* and *human rights* issues.

- News containing references to *asylum* tend to involve fragmented narratives. These narratives can go on for years. They usually do not provide the history or context that would allow audiences to engage with and make sense of them. Audiences, therefore, seem to fall back on their own knowledge and experience, which is already patchy and partial, because relies on fragmented media narratives in the first place.
- Events similar to those involved in *asylum* and *refugee* issues are dealt with very differently, when the individuals concerned are British or perceived to be ‘innocent’ victims in overseas contexts.

### ***Key Findings: Media Production***

- The issues that emerge around the coverage of *asylum* emerge not because of any failure of normal media practices, but precisely because professional journalists are carrying on with business as usual and doing what they always do.
- Coverage is never only the responsibility of individual journalists.
- Understanding the coverage must involve understanding the professional and newsroom cultures in which journalists work, and the commercial, ratings and marketing cultures which influence these. This includes understanding the influence of public relations/public affairs on journalism practice.
- If NGOs are to be effective ‘discourse changers’, they must understand and learn to work with this complexity. They need to engage with the conceptual frameworks within which news is made (e.g., *human rights*, *public safety*, *terrorism* and *multiculturalism*) and neither think in simplistic terms about ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ stories nor merely about censoring the use of individual words.

## ***Changing Look – Consistent Frameworks: News Coverage April to October 2006***

The representation of asylum seekers and refugees on British television news can be traced most clearly in the content of news coverage. In a sense, the content of broadcast news represents an expression of the discourses and beliefs related to *asylum* and *refugee* issues. However, the most overt aspects of content, i.e., images and words, may not show the whole picture. While changes in labelling and image selection may suggest a more positive representation of asylum seekers and refugees, a closer, thematic analysis tells a different story.

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### **Changes in Focus**

This study was in part designed to explore broadcast news coverage in ways that would be comparable to the analysis of the 2003 Article 19 report (Buchanan et al.). We have found some similarities as well as significant changes: *asylum* is no longer, or rarely, the main focus of the coverage. However, in 2006, as in 2002-03, much of the coverage remains linked to stories about the government's success or failure in controlling *immigration* and to the 'failure' of government policy. In 2003, Article 19 said:

"Policy is presented as a series of combative measures designed to weed out those who 'abuse the asylum system' and to prevent 'illegal immigrants' from entering the country in the first place..." (p. 12)

In many ways then this is still the case. However, by 2006, where *asylum* is mentioned specifically, the dominant concern, in quantitative terms, is deportation. In 2002-03 it was the closure of the Sangatte refugee camp in Calais. Interestingly, the Sangatte story was picked up again in April 2007, after our monitoring period.

The focus on deportation is related to the fact that policy had changed by 2006-07. While there was still an emphasis on numbers entering the country, policy was now focused more on 'removal' or 'enforcing deportation' (Home Office Policy March 2007) rather than policy regarding what asylum seekers do while living in the UK: for example, 'clamping down on benefit shopping' (Home Office press release 2002, quoted in Buchanan et al. 2003: 12). In 2006 journalists concentrate on testing the government on its targets and



the success of its policies. The focus on the broadcast news is on the system not on asylum seekers and refugees themselves.

## Permanence of the Conceptual Position

*Asylum* remains a part of a much more complex web of narratives and discourses. These are reflected in the quantitatively verifiable themes emerging from our research and are driven by political and institutional sources, as well as by public policy and public affairs machines; the Home Office represents a good example in this context. These are in fact supported by journalists' membership of the same 'issues communities'. This situation leads to journalists mostly staying within the 'issue community' to acquire information and comment, i.e., who and what they use as sources. Again this is demonstrated by our quantitative findings on sources. It is tempting here to say, as Lewis, Brookes, Mosdell and Threadgold (2006) did in relation to the coverage of the Iraq war by embedded journalists, that the issues which emerge around the coverage of *asylum* emerge "not because of any *failure* of normal media practices, but precisely because *professional journalists were carrying on with business as usual*." (p. 197, emphasis in the original) Journalists indeed seem to be "captured by their sources". (Davis 2003: 35)

We have mapped the recurring themes of the 2006 coverage as a concept map and located *asylum* within that network. This shows visually, how the very concept of *asylum* is now inevitably caught up in this network. This is also true for the journalists reporting the issues and for the publics to whom they report. Our analysis of the running orders of the news programmes we monitored during the period confirms the overall narrowness of the news agenda and the way *asylum* is embedded within that narrow framework/network. The narrowness of the news agenda, the position of *asylum* within it, plus the cumulative effect of more than 100 years of policy and media discourses that have constructed non-white *immigration* and *asylum* as a 'problem' (Kyambi 2005) – all these aspects combined continue to produce the concept *asylum* as a largely negative phenomenon. The themes with which *asylum* regularly collocates (co-occurs) are shown, both quantitatively and qualitatively, to be, for example, *crisis*, *chaos*, *lack of control*, *crime*, *terrorism*, *foreigners* (*black* and *Muslim*) and *threats to social cohesion*. The simple mention of the word *asylum* now seems to be enough to connote this entire conceptual field.

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## Changes in Labelling

Compared to the 2002-03 Article 19 study, we have found a considerable muting of the negative vocabulary about asylum seekers in broadcast news. However this has not changed the generally negative connotations of the word *asylum*, because the histories the word brings with it now connote so much negativity. It only has to be mentioned for the negative mythology to be re-activated. Even if the words remain unspoken or censored, *asylum* now means *illegal immigrant*, *bogus*, *scrounger*, *criminal*, *terrorist*. It only has to be mentioned for the negative mythology to be re-activated. This was made very clear during the course of this project, when some of our data was used by the IPPR to assess audience responses to broadcast and print coverage (Durante, IPPR, 2006; see also Lido et al., ESRC, 2006). Both these very recent research projects have also shown that it is impossible to predict what a 'positive' *asylum* story might be given the entrenched opinions held by different segments of the public at the present time.

It is also worth looking at print journalism as a point of comparison here for a moment: the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) has regularly attended events about the 'negative' coverage of *asylum* (again, see Cookson and Jempson 2005). But it remains the case that its own rules about what can constitute a complaint and the nature of its guidelines restrict the possibility of any real change. The guidelines tend to focus on words that should not be used rather than the more complex issue of the kinds of narrative structures supported by professional journalism practice or the conceptual field in which journalism practice around the coverage of *asylum* operates.

The real issues in challenging the way the media does things tend to come down to understanding the latter and to very complex arguments about 'freedom of speech' versus 'censorship', or 'impartiality' versus 'partiality'. Here the debate founders because to address these things head on would involve imagining quite new forms of journalism and press function and behaviour. In the end a critique of the complex ways in which stories are determined through the normal business of everyday journalism practice is not a story that fits conventional news values and requirements and so

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it literally cannot be told or heard in many of the contexts where people try to tell it.

The PCC also lacks group discrimination rules and this is a major barrier to achieving fairness towards groups like asylum seekers. At the JCHR meeting with editors in January 2007 the editors made it clear that they do respect the PCC rules and follow them. This only demonstrates how ineffective the rules actually are.

There is then now a good deal of evidence that this change in terminology, apparently driven by the general, and long standing debate about coverage (see Finney 2003; Cookson and Jempson 2005; JCHR Report March 2007), does not actually change the way the issues are viewed by those who hold anti-*asylum* views. Changing and legislating about words is no more use than changing individual images. It is the complex network of discourses and narratives with which *asylum* collocates that needs to be explored, understood, and changed, if we are to see real differences in the effects of coverage.

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## Changes in Images

The themes shown on the concept map are represented by a mix of words, phrases and stories. The focus on the system rather than the asylum seeker as individual or group also produces a difference in the kinds of images regularly associated with *asylum*. These tend to be images of institutions, e.g., Home Office buildings, prison interiors, rather than the dominant and stereotypical 2002-03 images of the 'threatening young male', alone or in groups. However, the images used still tend to be archival. Those images that do show human beings still suggest that *asylum* is a uniquely, or largely, masculine phenomenon. They are also still sometimes only loosely connected to the specific story. They regularly form, for instance, the visual background or accompaniment for the latest immigration statistics. The meanings of the images have, thus, not changed very much since 2002-03. Just like the word *asylum* itself, these images still connote dangerous and criminal masculinity as well as institutions, such as the Home Office, that have lost control of the nation's borders.

## **Confusion and Inaccuracy of Terminology**

The former inaccurate use of various complex legal and regulatory terms and concepts, e.g., *asylum seeker*, *illegal migrant*, *immigrant*, *refugee*, *indefinite leave to remain*, *economic migrant* etc., has become more complex in the course of 2006. There is still a lack of clarity and sometimes confusion across the monitored programmes relating to the status of individuals. It is not always clear why someone is identified as an asylum seeker or refugee, even though journalists in interviews spoke of using the labels only where 'relevant'. The term 'economic migrant' seems to have fallen out of use.

The latter development may be connected to the fact that over the course of 2005-6 the issue of migrant workers from recent EU accession states has become a part of a more general migration story. We did not analyse the coverage of migrant workers in detail, but it is clear that these incomers are not treated in the same way as asylum seekers. They are seen as a 'problem' where 'scarce resources' are an issue at local levels, and where control of their numbers seems to be a policy issue. But they are also accepted as 'workers' and there are many stories about the contribution they make to local and national economies. The reasons for the differences would be worth further exploration. The fact that they are European and that they have the right to work seem important factors.

## **Conflation and Confusion Between 'criminal Justice' and 'Human Rights'**

There is considerable confusion in all contexts monitored about the difference between *criminal justice* and *human rights* issues. This confusion seems unsurprising considering the government's 'managed migration' policy is a continuation of a policy history which for more than a century has constructed *asylum* and certain kinds of migration as a problem rather than a resource. This has encouraged a culture of disbelief where asylum claims are concerned. The focus has been and is on the 'control of borders' and the removal of those who have got in 'illegally' rather than on the *human rights* of those seeking *asylum* or the responsibility to offer hospitality to those in need (Kyambi 2005). The policy focus therefore is on the individual asylum seeker to prove himself/herself to be deserving rather than on the obligation of the

'host' to take responsibility for him or her. To ask for proof suggests a certain presumption of guilt, i.e., an attempt by the asylum seeker to 'cheat the system'. To take responsibility and offer hospitality would be to engage with the issue of *human rights*.

The dominant discourse of *human rights* is in fact a contradictory discourse (Douzinas 2000) and one which is rarely spoken of in the same context as immigration policy. These contradictions find their way, through sources, into coverage. The situation is made more complex by the fact that policy is also driven by media 'panics' (Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003) and that policy makers seem often to believe that 'the media' (viz. *The Sun*, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail*) do reflect public opinion and must therefore be taken seriously.

### ***In Partial Control of Production: The Position of the Journalist***

The news production process needs to be understood from the working journalist's point of view, if we are to understand how coverage of asylum seekers and refugees can be changed. Our findings based on a series of interviews with a journalists show: the journalists themselves are caught up in the web of news, the discourses identified by the concept map, in ways that are both unanalysed and completely explicit, precisely because they are so much a part of the professional routines of news gathering and construction.

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### **A Collaborative Process**

The first aspect of the television news production process to be recognised is its collaborative nature. The way a piece on *asylum* or *refugee* issues is contextualised or framed could almost be described as an accidental outcome of the complexities of the production process. It is certainly always the result of a collaborative effort in which the individual journalist, even if playing a lead role, does not work alone.

At each step of the way, from before assigning a story, to broadcasting it on the programming, a number of people have an influence on the shape a piece takes. Some of these influences are based on hierarchical structures within a news organisation; others have to do with the division of labour of the production process as

well as the personal relationships between the different newsroom members.

## **Captured by Sources**

The availability and dominance of certain sources is another aspect that plays a key role in the working life of journalists. Given the focus among journalists on holding the government to its targets and stated policy agendas, journalists are dependent on briefings, press releases and 'issues' whose origins are the Home Office, political parties and similarly recognized institutions in this 'debate'. Reporting is unlikely to change very much, until and unless there is political leadership and all party consensus regarding asylum policy of a very different kind to the current situation.

Alternatively, journalists might begin to seriously question the policy and analysis being offered to them by their sources, i.e., instead of asking why the policy fails, they might begin to ask why the policy is like it is to begin with (Castles 2004).

## **Balance and 'What the Public Wants'**

Journalists are also ambivalently positioned by the commercial contexts in which they work where maintaining audiences is a serious economic issue. In such a context, 'doing what the public wants', based on the new technologies of interactivity, polling and surveys within the industry (Huw Edwards Lecture, Cardiff, 2007), has come to carry considerable weight.

It is clear from our interviews with broadcast journalists that taking 'too soft a left, liberal' approach to *asylum* is seen as contradicting everything they believe about the values of objectivity and impartiality. This explains why one television editor told us that "perhaps the Mail and the Express had got it right". This anxiety about taking a position seen to be supportive of *asylum* seems to produce an over-compensation in terms of using easily accessible right-wing sources such as MigrationWatch UK as a 'balance'. The whole idea of 'balance' in these contexts needs to be re-thought and re-imagined. There are never just two sides to any story and two negative sides do not add up to 'balance'. Journalists do not seem at present to know where else to go with this issue.

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## Attitudes to and the Chance for Oxfam

The journalists we spoke to were either nervous of becoming involved in a project funded by Oxfam, for the reasons discussed above, or had not seriously considered Oxfam as a source on *asylum/refugee* issues. Other NGOs and charitable organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees may be regarded in a similar way. Relatively few are ever actually sourced in our data. This raises the question of how such organisations can work better with journalists around these issues.

There does seem to be a need for such groups to act as service providers to journalists. By learning more about the needs and constraints of the journalists working environment, taking recent audience research seriously (Durante, IPPR, 2006; Lido et al., ESRC, 2006) and moving beyond criticism of journalists and the simplistic promotion of 'positive' stories, they can become credible sources, and thus can help set the agenda with the mainstream media. There are models for this kind of working relationship. The history of the Refugee Media Working Group in Wales is one (also see Cookson and Jempson 2005).

NGOs and charitable organisations could also be acting as 'discourse shifters'. They do this already, but they need to do it in much more cohesive and concerted ways. They need to work with the knowledge of the current narrowness of the news 'concept map', pitch stories and run campaigns which actually challenge the current discursive networks, not just the use of words, the definition of terms, or the 'negative' tone of stories. These could operate in all kinds of novel ways which do not necessarily involve only the mainstream media.

## Alternative Ways of Working

This research, in particular the third case study described below, suggests that we do not scrutinise our own practices nearly as carefully as we do those of 'others' in 'foreign' countries. Media training offered to journalists in developing and post-conflict situations by the UK and other Western democracies often has a strong focus on *human rights* and the *abuse of human rights*. Guidelines drawn up by organisations like the Media Diversity Institute (MDI) also offer directions to journalists working in multi-ethnic societies. In post-conflict places such as Kosovo, the UN will

even intervene to regulate the media in post-conflict situations (Price and Thomson 2002). Still, it is surprising that we do not turn this searchlight on our own domestic, 'democratic' media where these same issues are concerned. There might well be models of good practice emerging from this work which could be applied to the issue of *asylum/refugee* coverage in the UK itself.

## ***A Closer, Qualitative Look: Three Case Studies***

In this research, we have complemented the quantitative content analysis with three qualitative case studies. These have enabled us to tease out the complex web of meaning, and the kinds of narrative structures in which *asylum/refugee* issues were embedded during the six months we monitored in 2006. It has also made it possible to see why, despite the absence the kind of labelling reported by Article 19 in 2002-03 (Buchanan et al. 2003), *asylum* and *refugee* remain terms invested with negative connotations.

### **The 'Home Office in Chaos'**

#### **Background**

The two major news stories in this case study were a) the problems surrounding the deportation of *foreign prisoners* upon their release; b) the questions over the number of *illegal immigrants* in the UK.

#### **Findings**

This case study investigates the finding that *asylum* was regularly mentioned but rarely the focus of coverage. More than 90% of the coverage analysed did not focus explicitly on *asylum* but of 65 items coded 14 did have *asylum* as their main theme. In the context of the coverage around a *Home Office in chaos*, *asylum* was incidental to the main issue of holding politicians to account. Nonetheless, *asylum* became a part of the ongoing narrative of a political system *in chaos*. *Asylum* was drawn into this story as a *crisis-generating* concept, signifying and exemplifying both the *chaos* in the Home Office and a *wider crisis* around *migration* and *criminality*.

This was not a simple narrative with a beginning, a middle and end. It could be better defined as a soap opera or a cumulative narrative, consisting of a large number of disjointed fragments. The disjointed nature of this narrative makes it incoherent and difficult to grasp for



anyone without full knowledge of the histories and issues involved. What remains immediately graspable is that *asylum* co-occurs with all things negative.

## **The ‘Afghan Hijackers’**

### **Background**

The coverage during our monitoring period saw the culmination of a long running legal battle between nine Afghan men, who had hijacked a plane in February 2000, and the Home Office. The hijackers along with a number of other passengers claimed *asylum* in the UK. In summer 2006 the courts ruled that they should be granted indefinite leave to remain.

### **Findings**

This second case study was one of the few long running news stories which directly involved and at times focused on specific asylum seekers. Within the main sample of news programmes, it was mentioned in twenty-two different news items during our monitoring period.

This case study is an excellent example of the lengthy, fragmented nature of cumulative narratives of *asylum*. Few viewers watching this story in 2006 would have been able to access its complex history spanning 6 years. It offers a further example of the potential dangers in the links made between *security* and *public safety* on the one side and *human rights* and *human rights legislation* on the other. This linkage seems to be driven by political and institutional consensus. The story re-emerges in 2006 because of an asylum case, but actually comes to symbolise a series of threatening ideas associated with *crime*, *terrorism* and a *risk to public safety caused by human rights law*.

## **Criminal Cases and Humanitarian Crises: ‘Refugees’ at Home and Abroad**

### **Background**

The focus of this case study is on a series of stories which are focused on the use of the terms *asylum seeker* and *refugee* in different contexts and different parts of the world. The stories range from the conviction of a drug dealer in the UK, *climate change*, the

*humanitarian crisis* in the Darfur region of Sudan to the armed conflict between Israel and Lebanon at the time.

## Findings

This case study highlights further issues about terminology, and points to some significant differences between *asylum* and *refugee* related news coverage in the UK context, and aspects of international news items involving *refugee* issues.

Our analysis focuses upon the following points: when and how the immigration status of an individual or group is mentioned in reports involving *asylum* and *refugee* issues; the significance of different terminology in descriptions of 'seeking refuge' in diverse geographical and political contexts; the construction of an opposition between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' asylum seekers and refugees : and some key contradictions in the dominant discourse through which *asylum* and *refugee* issues are 'usually' talked about in the UK context.

The tensions we highlight in the reporting of these unusual events offer an opportunity, available within UK media coverage itself, to question dominant *asylum* discourse - or at least to disturb our easy everyday familiarity with it. These international contexts appear to escape the legal and political weight which pervades *asylum* and *refugee* news in the UK. All refugees appear to be deserving. The reasons why people leave a country to seek refuge elsewhere are clearly articulated.

The question of 'Britishness' and the different standards we apply to ourselves and others are also made very clear in the language of the coverage of the Israel/Lebanon conflict. The idea of *British refugees* is clearly not something we are comfortable with. In this context they become *evacuees* or *returnees* but never *refugees*.

On the other hand, differences in approach to using the attribute *asylum seeker*, across the TV channels monitored, in reporting the sentencing of a Turkish drug dealer living in the UK raise a number of questions about how journalists should treat the immigration status of people who feature in television news. The evident lack of journalistic consensus on this issue, would suggest that journalists themselves are not necessarily very sure about the rationale informing their decision-making in this area.

## ***Making and Solidifying Meanings in the Web of News: The Audience's Position***

This research did not involve audience research. However, our findings do point convincingly in the direction of the evidence we have about the influence of the structure and forms of news on audience responses (Lewis 1991; Lewis et al. 2006). "Most news items have a narrative form that actively discourages viewers from making connections between ideas." (Lewis 1991: 142) *The absence*, in television news, of any clear narrative structure which provides context, histories and connections, and *the presence* of conflicting, even opposite opinions, leaves audiences dependent on whatever associative logics they can summon up from their own often limited experience to make sense of what they are seeing and hearing. That experience is actually mediated by regular and cumulative listening and viewing which provides them with the frameworks and web for making these associative interpretations.

Hence our attention in this report to running orders and concept mapping. These aspects effectively demonstrate the frameworks news programmes provide viewers with for understanding news coverage. These frameworks give them nodes or points with the intertextual and ideological resonance to allow them to make their own sense of what they view or read.

"What is particular about television news is that, unlike many other forms of television, it operates on a discursive level that most people find elusive. It portrays a world that is, in most cases, difficult to relate to. ...." (Lewis 1991: 143).

However, as Lewis also points out, the failure of TV news to communicate what broadcasters intend to communicate, "does not create silence, ... Meaning is being constructed and solidified." (1991: 134) Thus in his analysis of a complex news item about events in the 'West Bank', Lewis is able to show that the only item his viewers can 'read', the only one that has any ideological resonance for most of them and which they have seen often in news coverage before, is the image of violence. What "this *does* is to feed a residual racism, a world where foreigners fight one another for no particular reason" (p. 134, original emphasis).

The detailed accounts in the case studies of the cumulative and disconnected nature of television narratives, of the disparate and different roles the same characters can play across time, across channels and in different parts of the world, of the different and contradictory attributes they acquire in these contexts (e.g., deserving/undeserving; refugee/evacuee), of the radically different contexts which can frame them and the different themes to which they become attached across time (*terror, crime, chaos* etc.) also tell us something about the powerful ways in which the news discourse provides the stuff for making stories about *asylum* without necessarily offering any real background, history, connections or accurate sense.

There is now a good deal of very current evidence, some of it using our television data, to confirm that the concept map in which *asylum* and newsmakers are caught does produce this kind of meaning making among UK audiences (Durante, IPPR, 2006; Lido et al., ESRC, 2006). If that is so, then there are many reasons why we might want to work together to find ways of changing what is actually sayable and thinkable about *asylum* in the UK today. And we might also want to ask, collectively, whether the current television (media) focus on 'what audiences want' is the right question to be asking about issues of this kind.

# Literature Review

By Terry Threadgold

## ***Introduction***

The coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the print media has been extensively researched. In terms of broadcast coverage, however, the research has been far less extensive. As a consequence, this review section necessarily has most to say about print media research. But while the data – print rather than broadcast material – may differ, the issues and concerns on an analytical level are very similar. The issue of refugees and asylum seekers became highly politicised in the UK in the 1990s and has continued to be so up to and including the present. The controversial 1999 Immigration and Asylum Act introduced a 'dispersal process'. This meant that the issue of *asylum* began to impact on local communities all over the UK. From that time, local and national media across the UK became again increasingly interested in reporting on refugees and asylum seekers. In 2001, and again in 2005, *asylum*, *refugee* and *immigration* issues were politicised around national elections. Various events in the intervening years produced peaks of intense media activity in the otherwise regular pattern of *asylum* coverage, especially, but not exclusively, in the tabloid press. These events and issues included: the death of smuggled Chinese immigrants in a truck at Dover in 2000; the closure of the Sangatte refugee camp in Calais (2002-3); the regular publication of Home Office or MigrationWatch UK statistics; and the publication of successive Mori poll results on attitudes to migration.

Much of this coverage was characterised by the myths and stereotypes associated with the reporting of *asylum* and *refugee* issues. Research has shown these to be both of very long-standing as well as of global proportions (van Dijk 1988; d'Haenens and de Lange 2001; Horsti 2003; van der Falk 2003; Lynn and Lea 2003; ICAR 2004). In 2003 there was a good deal of evidence that broadcast television coverage was not significantly different to press coverage around these issues (Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003) and there is some evidence that radio, especially talk-back radio (RAM 2005:16; Speers, Wales Media Forum, 2001) can be a particular source of prejudice, hostility and inaccuracy. A number of studies have shown that the regional and local press do a much

better job of covering these issues than the national media (Finney 2003; RAM 2005).

The 2003 Article 19 report (Buchanan et. al.) mentioned here is of particular relevance to our project. Not only is it one of the few reports also analysing the broadcast coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues. In fact our own research was designed to explore broadcast news coverage in ways that would be comparable to the analysis reported in the Article 19 report. One of the findings of that report was that the news agenda was both very narrow, covering a small number of topics at any one time, and also common to both print and broadcast journalism. In this research, we monitored the print media only informally, to add context and background to the analysis of the broadcast coverage. The monitoring confirmed some of the findings of the 2003 report: the news agenda remained similarly narrow. But even the informal monitoring revealed some differences: it became clear that broadcast news programmes did not cover all *asylum* and *refugee* related stories carried by the press. However, there was still a connection between print and broadcast news, one that was defined by the press' leading role. Broadcasters usually only covered stories that had already had appeared in print.

The leading role of the press as well as the seriousness of the issue and its relationship both to *community cohesion* and to *human rights* has also been recognised on a parliamentary level. On 22 January 2007 the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) conducted a hearing on the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees by the press. Among the journalists giving evidence were Robin Esser, Executive Managing Editor of the *Daily Mail*, Peter Hill, Editor of the *Daily Express*, and Alan Travis, Home Affairs Editor of *The Guardian*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, their answers showed interesting parallels to the themes often dominant in their newspapers' coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues (HC 60-IV 2007). Esser (*Daily Mail*) described the issues involved as "probably the greatest demographic change in this nation since the Norman invasion", a "shambles" and embarrassment for the government. Hill (*Daily Express*) echoed these sentiments. He referred to "hundreds and thousands" of asylum seekers and suggested that they commit an "enormous amount of *crime*" (our emphasis). In contrast, Travis (*Guardian*) focussed on the treatment of asylum

seekers in the media and by society, referring to the “misleading picture” that had been painted.

## **Research**

In 2005, the Refugees, Asylum and the Media Project (RAM) Report recalled the activities the then Presswise had engaged in during the 1990s to combat the “pejorative language ... misleading statistics ... and clearly prejudicial tone” of much media coverage. The Report makes very clear the effects of a regular and cumulative diet of misleading and pejorative reporting about asylum seekers and refugees: it produces fear and prejudice among “the public and the country’s elected representatives”. It also points to the less often articulated “symbiotic relationship between politicians and the press”: politicians make inflammatory claims; these are sensationalised in news stories that prompt public outcry; this in turn produces policy driven by “irrational, knee-jerk reactions” (RAM 2005: 8). With considerable prescience, the report also pointed to the very real risk that this kind of coverage could have ‘a major impact on human rights, race relations, the integration of Travellers and refugees within the settled community, and on public policy issues such as housing, education and welfare benefits.’ (RAM 2005: 8). The same report also noted the difficulty of raising formal objections to that coverage, despite the existence of various pieces of legislation, the newspaper industry’s Code of Practice and the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) (p. 7ff).

In January to March 2005 MediaWise (the new name for what was Presswise), together with the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) undertook further research on coverage as well as adequacy and effect of the then PCC guidelines on the reporting of these issues. This research, funded by the Home Office, was finally published in January 2007 (Smart et al.). Again, the report focuses the debate on the symbiotic relationship between politicians and the press. It acknowledges at the outset that media coverage on *asylum* may have more to do with “the priorities of politicians than intentional media bias” (Introduction). The PCC guidelines on *asylum* are found to have worked in general, although, significantly, not where the most widely circulating national press publications are concerned.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights, *The Treatment of Asylum Seekers* (JCHR) report referred to above and published in March 2007 offers a damning indictment of the effects of government policy on asylum seekers. This makes the current relationship between press and politicians even more problematic. In the same week in March 2007, the Leeds Destitution Inquiry, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, published the report *Moving On: from destitution to contribution* (March 2007). This report offers further evidence of the negative influence of policy and of the need for policy change. The five Commissioners, Kate Adie OBE, Julian Baggini, Courtenay Griffiths QC, Bill Kilgallon OBE and Sayeeda Warsi, called for a policy in which asylum seekers can contribute to society rather than rely on precarious handouts. It is noteworthy that there has been little coverage of magnitude of any of these research findings. *The Guardian* was one exception, and the reports were also covered on the BBC's and other websites.

The cumulative effect of the policy discourse, converted into news through the symbiotic relationship between the press and politicians, can be seen in the equally cumulative media narrative of *asylum*, which has been well researched over a long period (see above). These representations are historically very old (Threadgold 1997) and global in scope. They are documented in various continental European countries, Australia, and New Zealand as well as the UK (van Dijk 1987; Blommaert and Verschueren 1988; Hage 1998, 2003; Crisp 1999; Roscoe 2000; Speers, Wales Media Forum, 2001; Pickering 2001; Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003). Mediated links between *asylum*, *terrorism* and Islam became more prominent in the UK press leading up to the Iraq war in 2003, and were exacerbated by the London bombings on 7 July 2005 and the attempted bombings two weeks later. Sections of the media again focussed heavily on such links in July 2007, when verdicts were handed out for the attempted bombings.

We also know from many concerted attempts at monitoring media coverage, including that carried out by the RMWG in Wales (Speers, Wales Media Forum, 2001), that there are typical elements of the media story about *asylum*. These include a focus on numbers (as above in the quotes from evidence given to the JCHR in 2007); on numbers as creating a burden on scarce resources; on party political debates around these issues; and on the theme of invasion by large numbers (*swarms*, *hordes* etc.) of *bogus* or *false* asylum



seekers; and almost always asylum seekers and refugees are gendered male in images and narrative. This narrative is often embedded in, or has embedded in itself, reports of policies designed to reduce numbers and repel invaders. Often the reports are about the failure of these policies; and thus about governments who have lost control of 'our borders'. The telling of this story is often justified by the story of public opinion mobilised against such invasion, e.g., Mori poll results. And it is a story that collocates (co-occurs) in the news with reports of other kinds of 'foreign threats' *conflict, infection and contagion, e.g., war, HIV/Aids, Muslim fundamentalism, drugs, crime, and terrorism*. Asylum seekers and refugees are constructed as objects of *fear* and agents of *threat and danger, a risk* to the social body which is imagined as intact, uniform and white or British (see also Anderson 1983; Hage 1998).

However, to use the word 'collocate' is to say something more than 'co-occur'. The word is a term in linguistics for the probability that words, phrases or narratives will co-occur precisely because they are seen to belong to the same field or subject-matter, to share meanings and to belong together. Thus, although it is almost certainly the case that these collocations are neither conscious nor deliberate, the fact that news workers, at whatever level, regularly *do* put them together, tells us something about the unconscious or habitual connections they make as part of their professional practice and about the habitual understandings and beliefs that professional practice tends to give rise to. The editorial statements quoted above offer practical examples of the way this works. What is more, newspaper editorial practice matters because of the ways in which it impacts on the – in some ways more influential – broadcast coverage of these events (Hargreaves and Thomas 2002; Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003).

### ***The Discursive Construction of 'Asylum': the Difficulties of Changing the Media Story.***

The media narrative is complex and multiply sourced. The web of discourses within which it operates is the same web within which those working to change the discourses also operate. Van Dijk (1993) has explored what he called the discourses of *elite* racism across a range of institutions including the law, *immigration*, politics and everyday life. As Douzinas (2000) and Lui (2002) have pointed

out, the very legal definitions of the *asylum seeker* or the *refugee* are de-humanising. Douzinas calls these processes which make nouns of people 'the death of human rights'. Blommaert and Verschueren (1988), in a similar study to van Dijk's, also show how: "mainstream pro-migrant rhetoric shares ideological work with anti-migration rhetoric" (1988: 21). Pro-migrant rhetoric, they argue, allows itself (as journalists do) to participate in the policy driven arguments about the 'management of diversity', and thus becomes complicit in the policy construction of diversity and migration as 'worries' in need of management by the powerful (1988: 11-15).

Two areas in the literature where pro- and anti-migration rhetoric seem to share ideological work are important here. The first of these is the focus on work attempting to change the media discourse by changing or censoring the use of words (e.g., the PCC Guidelines on *asylum*) and insisting on accurate definitions of terms referring to complex legal statuses. The difficulty here is that despite the provision of lists of accurate definitions for journalists to work with by the Refugee Councils, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and others, and the censoring of certain terms by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), the terms do represent problematic categories that are increasingly blurred in reality (Castles et al., 2002: ch.3). Moreover, focussing on words and the censorship of words, may curb some of the worst excesses of the tabloid press, but it fails altogether to deal with the cumulative patterns of collocation which link *asylum* with *crime*, *terrorism* and *scrounging* – to name just a few of the most regular current connotations of the word. Nor does it curb the tendency for these connotations to implicate negatively things and concepts originally associated positively with *asylum*, like *human rights*. As the Guardian representative at the JCHR in January 2007 suggested, the term *asylum*, as a result of prolonged media usage in negative contexts, has become a term of abuse capable on its own of calling up all of its negative historical associations (HC 60-IV, 2007).

The second area noted in the literature has to do with attempts to challenge the media discourse about the 'magnitude of the problem': reflected in use of statistics in the coverage to show that numbers are out of control. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) point out that this concern with 'lack of control of numbers' is in fact an international policy issue, and that from UNESCO down, "the twin

worries of (*cultural or ethnic*) diversity and migration" (p. 11 their emphasis) and thus the 'management of diversity' and of numbers have become a prime a policy concern. To seek then to change the media narrative by telling the same story differently, by providing the 'facts' about the control of borders is to be unwittingly partially complicit with this very problematic *immigration* discourse. These 'facts' tend to include: 'there is no invasion', 'all is under control', 'the figures are inaccurate', 'we are not being swamped', as reported in Buchanan et. al. (2003), but these still assume that 'control of borders' is in fact an appropriate policy response.

This position totally fails to deconstruct the policy discourse, leaving it unquestioned, and leaving its language to continue to do its public and cumulative work. Thus the government appears to have lost control not because of 'bad policy' but because asylum seekers 'are out of control'. Other research on migration policy shows very clearly what other questions could be asked to show why migration policies fail (Castles 2004).

### ***The Huge Stabilities of Discourse: The London Bombings 7 July 2005 and 21 July 2005***

The following very brief review of newspaper reporting around the London bombings in 2005 is designed to show some of the diversity, some of the changes and some of the huge stabilities in the discourses which construct these issues. This review serves as a kind of reference point. The report itself is about broadcast journalism news, but we know that news usually circulates from press to broadcast and back again, aided and abetted by the professional broadcast newsroom practice of reading the morning newspapers. This account of a moment in the history of press coverage of a series of events demonstrates very clearly how issues and stories come to 'stick' together and to form collocational sets which come to seem like 'common sense'. The collocations observed in this press coverage are, moreover, collocations to which we will return in the analysis of the broadcast material later on in this report. Of particular interest to note here is the framing of *human rights* and *human rights legislation* as *threats to public safety*.

In the immediate aftermath of the London bombings the media appeared to be working quite deliberately towards assisting in the

construction of *community cohesion*. It was not just that they showed restraint, but actually that there was much concerted effort to construct a multicultural capital proud of its diversity and a community standing together against a terrorist threat which had become suddenly very real.

*The Daily Mirror* (4 August 2005) published 'Don't lose faith in Britain' (p. 6), an article by the writer Melvyn Bragg, which included the following as part of its 'rallying cry':

"We have prided ourselves on giving *asylum* and it has been, on the whole, a great and enduring asset. .... We are the great mongrel people ..... London is a palace of variety, unrivalled by any other city and a treasure house of tongues. ..." (our emphasis)

In the same paper on the same day the article 'MP in 'Get Out' Storm' by Bob Roberts (p. 9) began with the sentence: "A senior Tory was accused of stoking up racial tension yesterday as he called for a mass exodus of Muslims from Britain." On the same page a senior Muslim, Dr. Zaki Badawi, Head of the Muslim College in London and chairman of the Council of Mosques and Imams, advised Muslim women to stop wearing the hijab to avoid aggression and molestation. The paper's editorial called Tory behaviour in this context a "Cynical Act of Bigotry", reminding the Tories of the failure of their attempt to play the 'race card' in the 2005 elections and mirroring the message of the Melvyn Bragg piece.

Yet, in the same week *The Daily Express* (27 July 2005) carried the front-page headline 'Bombers are all Sponging Asylum Seekers' with the sub-headline 'Britain gave them refuge and now they want to repay us with death'.

In an article called 'Hate Crimes soar after Bombings', *BBC News Online* (news.bbc.co.uk, 3 August 2005) reported on statistics that showed: "Religious hate crimes, mostly against Muslims, have risen six-fold in London since the bombings." Perhaps more alarming than the news of this increase are the 'normal' figures against which the increase was plotted, figures attesting to the utter regularity and normality of racist attacks in today's Britain.

MediaWise (editorial @mediawise.org.uk) issued a bulletin on 29 July 2005, in which it called for restraint and pointed to the established links between such coverage and the increase in racist attacks. The bulletin quoted the report *Media Image, Community Impact* (ICAR 2004) which provides compelling evidence of the links, and pointed to the relationship between headlines like that of *The Daily Express* quoted above and the “alienation that drives people to desperate acts (whether it is ‘suicide bombing’ or racist attacks) against innocent people”.

The build-up of anti-Muslim feeling over this period has been palpable and the general public know this because the media tells them about it on a daily basis. Perhaps worse than this, and less obvious, but prescient for this report, was the focus on *human rights* as ‘part of the problem’, which emerged as key to the discourse in this period.

On 1 August 2005 *The Daily Express* carried a front-page headline: ‘The Human Rights Act was the first thing on the minds of the cowardly terror suspects as they were rounded up. This law must be scrapped now before our national security is put at any further risk’. On page 12, beside the editorial on that day, is the additional headline: ‘We Must Ditch the Human Rights Act Now to Beat Terror’. It leads with a column by Virginia Blackburn claiming that terrorists use the act as a refuge from justice.

On Saturday, 6 August 2005 *The Daily Telegraph* carried the front page headline: ‘Blair to Curb Human Rights in War on Terror’.

In *The Daily Mirror* of the same day we are told that Blair’s 12-point plan includes an “Asylum Clampdown” (p. 9). *The Daily Mirror* editorial, ‘Resist US Terror Lead’ (p. 6) tries to have it both ways. It supports the government action with this warning: “However, the government must not ape US terror laws that have ridden roughshod over many individual freedoms – the very freedoms we hold dear.”

*The Observer* on 7 August 2005 carried an important feature on the political communication or possible lack of it, which had prompted Blair’s response. This is headed ‘FOCUS: Fight Against Terrorism’ with the large heading ‘CRACKDOWN’ below the image of an accusatory Blair and the radical Muslim cleric, Abu Qatada (pp. 13 to 15). Blair is reported to “have swept aside” any caveats against

such action and to have taken the Home Office by surprise with his announcement. On the Comment page (p.24) Mary Riddell in a piece entitled 'Fight fear with Freedom' identifies much of the Blair response since 7 July 2005 as deriving from the *Sun's* 'Lawless Britain' campaign. After a careful critique of the 'scaremongering' involved and a correction of the worst inaccuracies and misrepresentations in the *Sun's* coverage, she remarks:

"This scaremongering might seem too crass to mention, had it not found an instant echo in Tony Blair's measure to make the country safer. No-one would question workable new provisions, even though countering terror usually founders for want of intelligence or evidence, not because of any lack of laws. Unfortunately too much of Mr. Blair's nebulous and inflammatory wish list appears to have been compiled on the back of a beer mat by the more rabid patrons of Millwall FC."

There is an ambivalent and confusing 'balance' in these arguments, for and against, accurate and inaccurate, which produces a cacophony of ambient news and regularly links *terrorism*, *human rights*, Islam and *threats to public safety*. Of course few readers or viewers will access or read this range of print coverage but audience research at the time of this coverage would almost certainly have shown results not unlike those produced by Greg Philo and his colleagues in relation to the public understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict derived from television coverage (Philo et al. 2004). Certainly, the government weighing in on the side of the *Sun* and the *Express* must impact on public perceptions of the news arguments. In all of this we see in practice the cycle of inflammatory statements or events, sensational and inaccurate coverage, perceived public reaction and sudden policy change that has been so common a feature of mediated public policy around these issues in the UK and is discussed over and over again in the literature reviewed above.

### ***Public Perceptions: The Effects of Media Coverage***

The coverage also attests to some of the established and therefore very hard to shift repertoires of journalism: the doctrine of news values which determines what will be considered to be 'news', the overall narrowness of the news agenda at any one time, and the

concept of 'balance' in news reporting which tries to represent 'both sides of the story' – when there may be many more than two and the means of selecting is not always clear. What this produces, for even an attentive and focussed reader or viewer/listener is an ambivalent, partial, alarming, and fear-provoking media discourse. For many readers/viewers for whom news is merely 'ambient' and not closely attended to, what is actually understood or retained is likely to be yet more loosely connected to the actual representation of events (Hargreaves and Thomas 2002).

If we needed any proof of this, there is also now a good deal of evidence about public understanding of these issues and its relationship to media representation (Lewis, IPPR, 2004) Interim report 2004). Recent MORI Polls (commissioned by a variety of different organisations: Reader's Digest 2000; MigrationWatch 2003; Amnesty International UK, Refugee Action, Refugee Council 2004) give evidence more than anything else of widespread ignorance of the histories, contexts and reasons that produce asylum seekers and refugees, of the complexities involved in historical and global flows of migration, and of the facts and realities of being an asylum seeker or a refugee in the UK today. What people seem to believe does however tie in quite closely with now well evidenced and researched patterns of media coverage over a long period (Speers, Wales Media Forum, 2001; Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003; also see the MediaWise project: [www.ramproject.org.uk](http://www.ramproject.org.uk)). Thus in 2003, although the UK hosted just 1.98% of the world's asylum seekers and refugees, the public estimated a number more than 10 times higher, believing on average that Britain hosted nearly a quarter (23%) of the world's refugees and asylum seekers. They also believed that first-generation immigrants comprise 23% of the population, while the real figure is 6% (Mori June 2003). In 2004, 85 percent of respondents associated negative words and phrases with media coverage of *asylum*. Two-thirds (64%) identified the term *illegal immigrant* as the word the media use when referring to refugees and asylum seekers; yet refugees and asylum seekers are not in the UK illegally. Other words commonly associated with media coverage of asylum seekers were *desperate*, *foreigners*, *bogus*, and *scroungers*. The word *persecuted* was identified only by 20% of respondents and then only in sixth place. At the other end of the scale, words not readily associated with media coverage of *asylum*

and chosen by just 1-2% of respondents were: *skilled, talented, intelligent, hard working, and welcome*. (Mori 2004)

Not surprisingly then, research continues to show that anxieties about *immigration* and *asylum* have continued to move higher up the public agenda in the last ten years. The Mori Social Research Institute noted in July 2004 that: "*Race relations* and immigration have been in the top six issues facing Britain for more than 12 months. A few years ago, it barely registered as a concern." (our emphasis) According to a MORI poll in November 2003, the issue of *race* and *immigration* was the third most important, ahead of crime, defence and the economy. The issue is ranked the most important by 29%, behind education on 33% and the NHS on 41%. Ten years before the figure was below 10%.

There is then every indication that the media discourse, produced in and through the ritualistic, everyday practices of journalism and newsgathering (van Dijk 1993: ch.8), and in conversation with powerful institutions, has had and continues to have an effect. It is performative. It constructs the realities of which it speaks. And it does this, not because of any intention, but because the act of story-telling inherent in news coverage echoes other such acts. It "accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices" (Butler 1997:51). Butler is speaking of 'hate speech' here, but the cumulative effect of the media discourse on *asylum* is also injurious to those who are its objects (see Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003). And as she argues, it works because "the speaker who utters the racist slur is thus citing that slur, making linguistic community with a history of speakers" (Butler 1997: 52). The speaker repeats what has come to have the power of common sense. It is precisely this aspect of the discourse of *asylum* as performative common sense which 'injures' and which makes it very difficult to locate "final accountability for that injury in a single subject and its act" (ibid: 52). The problem is located in a complex network, an assemblage or archive of bodies, emotions, beliefs, practices and texts. This is why 'myth busting' activities and guidelines about the use of words, or targeting the practices of individual journalists, have never managed to change the discourse, except provisionally, occasionally and locally. It is also why, in this report, and in our work on broadcast coverage of the issues, we have tried to refocus the debate on these complexities, mapping these as a starting point for further interventions.



# Methodology

## ***Introduction***

This study of the news coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues is focused upon broadcast news media. The study combined analysis of content and production aspects. As well as carrying out both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the media content, the research team conducted a series of interviews with journalists and editors from the BBC and ITN, the company providing news to ITV and Channel 4. This section of the report provides a brief outline of the design of our research methodology for both the content and production areas of our study.

## ***Content Study – Quantitative Analysis***

In order to analyse the coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* related news items, the research team recorded and monitored four daily news programmes between 24 April and 24 October 2006: *BBC 1 News* at 10pm, *ITV1 News* at 10.30pm, *Channel 4 News* at 7.00pm and a half hour of *Sky News* at 10pm. These programmes were selected to provide a comprehensive overview of late evening news content across UK terrestrial channels, with a point of comparison provided by the segment of rolling news on the *Sky News* channel.

Between 24 April and 31 July each of these programmes was closely monitored and all news items referring to *asylum* and/or *refugees* or to *immigration* issues more widely were identified. These items were then collected for further analysis. Complete running orders for each news programme were also compiled. With our focus on the representation of asylum seekers and refugees, we narrowed down the material further for the quantitative part of the content analysis: from the wider corpus of broadcast research material, our 'quantitative content analysis corpus' was compiled in which every news item that mentioned the words *asylum* or *refugee* and that featured a British or clear European dimension was selected. This included the most minor of mentions of the words *asylum* or *refugee*. Items for instance were selected that featured a correspondent standing in front of a sign containing the word *asylum*, such as the 'Field House Immigration and Asylum Appeals Tribunal', even if there was no further mention of the words *asylum* or *refugee* beyond this minor visual reference. However, items that did mention the words *asylum* or *refugee*, but had no explicit British

or European dimension were not selected. This therefore excluded items about displaced persons and refugee camps in the Sudan, for example, or about *climate change refugees* in Alaska. These items remained in our wider corpus, however, and were analysed qualitatively in case studies (more on this below).

On the 'quantitative content analysis corpus' the research team carried out a detailed quantitative content analysis. The coding schema (see Appendix II) was adapted from that used in research conducted by Article 19 in 2002-03 (Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003). That report, too, examined the media representation of *asylum* and *refugee* issues. Basing out coding schema on that of the Article 19 study, enabled us to make some points of comparison between the findings from 2002-03 and those from 2006.

For the current study a team of two researchers worked closely together in coding the sample to ensure consistency of coding. This involved continuous close interaction and consultation between the coders throughout the study, from finalising the design of the schema, to extensive pilot coding of the material, and developing a very detailed codebook including extensive working notes. The final coding schema allowed the research team to code and then analyse patterns and trends across the coverage. This included key areas in terms of content, such as use of sources, aspects of language, and the prevalence of certain images, as well as more structural features of the coverage, such as its occurrence in different delivery formats, such as anchor introductions, packages by correspondents, or interviews. This data was then analysed using the computer programme Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

### ***Content Study – Qualitative Analysis***

The research team continued to monitor these news programmes for *asylum* and *immigration* news through to 24 October 2006, and continued to write detailed running orders for *BBC 1 News at 10*. The team scanned the other channels to filter relevant material for a wider contextual corpus of material. This contextual corpus was also supplemented by material collected from BBC 2's *Newsnight* and Radio 4's *Today* and *World at One* programmes, which were also recorded throughout the six month monitoring period. All items collected throughout were catalogued in an Excel database. This

allowed the team to keep track of the development of key stories across channels, whether or not the words *asylum* or *refugee* featured in the coverage.

The development of a detailed, qualitative case study approach drawing upon both our content analysis material and the wider range of contextual material was driven by the nature of the results of our quantitative content analysis. It became clear to us that the coverage was different from previous monitoring periods. Previous studies had highlighted issues surrounding the 'inaccurate' use of particular labels to refer to asylum seekers and refugees (*illegal asylum seekers*, *bogus* etc.), or of certain metaphors deployed to illustrate the *asylum problem* (*swamping*, *flooding* etc.). In contrast, the material we were looking at raised a very different set of issues. Our content analysis showed that the use of particular, stigmatising word was not prevalent. From thematic coding and the close monitoring of the material, however, it became apparent that this did not mean that asylum seekers and refugees were now being represented in a positive light. The coverage still appeared to be generating negative meanings associated with *asylum* as an issue. To investigate these meanings in a more complex way, the research team selected three case studies for close, textual and conceptual analysis:

- the case of the, so-called *Afghan hijackers*;
- events around the *Home Office in chaos* narrative;
- various news stories to illustrate variations in language use between national and international news discourse invoking *asylum* and *refugee* issues

For these case studies, we have drawn upon the wider contextual corpus of material including material from some key dates of the coverage on *Newsnight* and Radio 4's *Today* and *World at One* programmes. Through the case studies we have sought to explore various key aspect of the news coverage referencing *asylum* and *refugee* issues: the complex set of discourses currently constructing and articulating ideas about *asylum*; the shifting terminology in use between media reports focussing upon different geo-political contexts; and the impact of certain formalistic features of the broadcast news upon the construction of meaning. As part of this we have also explored some key dimensions of what Aeron Davis

(2003:35) has described as the 'capturing' of journalists by their sources, with a particular focus upon the institutional political context within which *asylum* and *refugee* issues are articulated in news. Considering these various aspects, the case studies demonstrate, how and why a different set of issues to those that can be revealed by quantitative content analysis alone are now central to understanding how meaning surrounding asylum seekers and refugees is constructed in the news media.

### ***Linking Qualitative and Quantitative – Concept Mapping***

In order to illustrate our key findings on the positioning of *asylum* and *refugee* issues within this complex discursive context, the research team has developed a set of concept maps (see Appendix I). The concept maps represent the discursive framework within which *asylum* and *refugee* issues are positioned. Its prominence at the beginning of the report signifies its centrality to the overall findings, and the importance we attach to this mode of understanding the operation of media discourses surrounding *asylum*.

The set of concept maps was generated from our day to day work in the media monitoring room. From the beginning of the monitoring period, the team developed a wall-chart which comprised a set of index cards representing the main story categories and wider themes which were emerging in the coverage. As the monitoring progressed, the team began to arrange the cards on the wall according to how these themes and categories appeared to be linked together. Each news item collected was individually assessed for the main themes represented in it, and its 'identifier' was detailed on the relevant index cards. The team continually discussed and reassessed the relationships and linkages identified between categories and themes, and thus the basis upon which the cards were arranged on the wall. As new news items were added we critically reflected upon our interpretations of the coverage and our justifications for identifying relationships between its various dimensions. In this way, our concept mapping developed through the six-month period of our media monitoring research.

Our digitally rendered concept maps are therefore the result of our systematic observations of the coverage. They also logically link with and serve as a graphical representation of the arguments emerging

from our qualitative analyses. They present a clear picture of how a diverse range of stories are linked together in a complex network or web of narrative themes. By visually mapping this web and the structures of meaning through which *asylum* was woven in the coverage, we can clearly illustrate our argument that *asylum* can still be negatively articulated, regardless of whether the coverage has largely eliminated particularly 'loaded' words. But we also intend to demonstrate the regularity of association, or collocation, between particular news narratives and discourses which may form the 'common sense' or 'sedimented' framework of ideas from which news is constructed, and from which future news in this area will potentially be resourced.

## Concept Map Explainer

The two maps represent two different levels of abstraction. In each, asylum seekers and refugees are positioned in the centre. This may seem to contradict the assertion and key finding of this study that these issues were rarely the focus of news coverage and played a rather marginal role during the monitoring period. But the central position is based on the fact that *asylum* and *refugee* issues were the focus of this research. With the help of the concept maps the research team is trying to show the influences upon and the interrelations of other aspects with *asylum* and *refugee* issues. This purpose is better served by this central positioning.

Map 1 shows the higher level of abstraction. It traces the relationship of *asylum* and *refugee* issues with the four main concepts (in red boxes) that underpin the coverage: *changing society*, *public safety*, *human rights*, and *politics*. These concepts are not necessarily an explicit part of the coverage. But the research team decided upon these, based on its analysis of the coverage. The main concepts are connected directly with each other or via a number of themes and topics (in green boxes) that dominated coverage during the monitoring period. These connections already display a complex network of relationships on this level. To avoid complicating the picture further, the connections to the level of 'asylum seekers and refugees' (in the yellow box) are shown in a separate map, map 2.

Map 2 does not feature the four main concepts. This higher level of abstraction is left behind. Instead map 2 introduces a new level of closer context: the key events associated with the dominant themes

and topics that mentioned *asylum* and *refugee* issues during the monitoring period. Key events can be connected with each other. They can also relate to more than one of the key themes and topics. It is through these key events that 'asylum seekers and refugees' are connected to the level of the dominant themes and topics, which in turn are connected to the four main concepts (on map 1).

## ***Production Study – Interviews with Journalists***

One of the main aims of the project was to answer the question as to why news discourse surrounding asylum seekers and refugees is constructed in the manner that it is. Key to answering this question is to analyse the production process of news, to understand how certain features of this process and the practices of journalists might function to influence the construction of the coverage. The research team were less interested in an abstract critique of the work of journalists, than to analyse and seek to explain the conditions upon which that coverage is premised. In other words, by observing and speaking to those who work in the newsroom, we wanted to understand the institutional pressures and constraints as well as the motivations and values informing the production of news relating to refugees and asylum seekers.

To obtain access to newsrooms for ethnographic research, the production aspect of the project, the research team set up meetings with representatives from Channel 4 News, BBC News and ITV News. Unfortunately, after lengthy negotiations, the BBC News department declined to take part in our research. This in turn had an impact on the decisions of Channel 4 News and ITV News, both of whom had previously been far more open to the idea of participating, but consequently withdrew their support from the newsroom observation. In place of ethnographic research, however, individual journalists from each news organisation, as well as editorial staff from Channel 4 News and ITV News did agree to be interviewed.

Based on the preliminary findings from the content study, the team devised a set of questions that formed the basis of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix IV). The questions were developed in order to encourage our participants to discuss some of the key areas of newsroom practice, attitudes and journalistic values relevant to our research. However, the open and flexible approach ensured that

participants were able to interpret, respond to and challenge the questions in their own way, to talk more freely about their experiences as journalists reporting *asylum* and *refugee* issues, and, potentially, to talk about any areas that the research team had not anticipated. Researchers worked in pairs in all but one of the interviews. In each interview one researcher took the lead on questioning, while the other picked up interesting avenues for further questioning as the interview progressed. All of the interviews were conducted in the journalists' own working environments – the newsrooms of the broadcasters in central London.

## News Context and Collocations

News programmes are made up of individual pieces. These pieces, however, do not exist in isolation from each other. They are interconnected. Sometimes the interconnection is explicit, i.e., a topic is covered by a number of pieces; the anchor joins them by way of his or her introduction. Sometimes the connection is more implicit, i.e., pieces cover similar topics; the anchor, however, does not establish explicit connections. But regardless of topic, all pieces are connected by the fact that they appear in the same programme. They collocate. The strength of this collocation varies. This chapter will look at running orders to analyse two of these influences: one, the frequency with which certain topics collocate with each other; two, the placement and proximity of pieces in the running order.

The first section of the two main sections will set the wider news context, the wider collocative framework. Here the main stories that occurred during the monitoring period will be listed and the major stories explained. In the second section, a closer look at the running orders of 25 July 2006 should serve as an example how the news coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues becomes part of complex network of collocations within individual news programmes. The research team wrote up running orders for *Channel 4 News*, *ITV News at 10.30* and *Sky News at 10* from 24 April to 31 July as well as for *BBC News at 10* from 24 April to 24 October.

### ***The Wider News Context***

Based on an analysis of the running orders the research team identified 10 of the main stories from the monitoring period that played a substantial part in setting the background for the overall news coverage: problems at the Home Office; the future of Tony Blair as Prime Minister; the situation in the Middle East; the Iraq war; the war in Afghanistan; the fight against *terrorism*; *social cohesion* in the UK; the crash of a television presenter in a race-car; the football World Cup in Germany; and *climate change*. As is apparent the stories came from a wide spectrum of topic areas, from political, crime, sports, celebrity, and scientific news. For a better understanding a brief description of the 10 main stories and a list of another 15 stories, which had a somewhat lesser but still strong impact, will be given below.



First, a few general observations: some of the stories completely dominated the news for a period of time, e.g., the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon or the football World Cup in Germany; others, though not as dominant, were covered consistently and extensively, e.g., the debate over *social cohesion* in the UK or the war in Afghanistan. Also, the lines between the stories cannot always be clearly drawn. Several of the stories at times connected with each other, e.g., the problems at the Home Office at times coincided with the debate over the future of Tony Blair as Prime Minister; the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were at times connected to the fight against *terrorism*. On some occasions, stories from the second tier also tied in with the ten main stories. It is also interesting to note that some of these stories had an *asylum* and *refugee* dimension, e.g., problems at the Home Office (see Case Study I) or the fight against *terrorism*.

- *Problems at the Home Office:* This topic combined several events, which at times dominated news coverage. It started with the row over the failure of the Home Office to consider foreign national prisoners for deportation upon their release. This culminated in the replacement of Charles Clarke as Home Secretary by John Reid. The Home Office remained in the headlines over the numbers of *illegal immigrants* and EU migrants in the UK as well as John Reid's declaration that parts of the ministry were "not fit for purpose". Updates on reform efforts as well as problems with prison overcrowding kept the issues in the news throughout. At times the problems at the Home Office coincided with discussions over the future of Tony Blair.
- *Tony Blair's future as Prime Minister:* Blair came under serious attack right at the beginning of the monitoring period. Combining the *foreign prisoners' deportation row*, an extramarital affair of Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, and problems for Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt to a so-called 'Black Wednesday', the news programmes suggested that the Blair government was unravelling. A cabinet reshuffle following the local elections did not quieten the discussion. The media continued to speculate about the possible date for Tony Blair to step down, as well as whether Chancellor Gordon Brown would easily succeed him or had to face a leadership contest. In the later phase

the coverage was most intense around the Labour Party conference.

- *The crisis in the Middle East:* This topic had three main aspects: a) the conflict between Fatah and Hamas to form a government for the Palestine territories; b) the relationship between Israel and the Palestine Authority, and c) the conflict between the Hezbollah and Israel that, eventually, led to war. Aspects a) and b) were covered throughout the period, but with less emphasis. After Israel started to attack Lebanon in response to the kidnapping of several Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah, the conflict dominated the news for several weeks. From the middle until the end of July, early August all the news programmes presented at least some of their coverage from Israel or Lebanon.
- *The fight against terrorism:* Domestic and international events kept this topic consistently in the headlines. The anti-terror raid in the Forest Gate area of London as well as the prevention of an alleged terrorist plot to bring down several transatlantic flights, each dominated the news for several days. A number of events relating to the bombings in London on 7 July 2005 also featured prominently: the release of videos of the suicide bombers; the release of reports into the 7/7 bombing; the first anniversary of the bombings; and the report into the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes by police two weeks after the bombing. An ongoing trial against alleged terrorists in London was also covered consistently as was the controversy between the Home Office and the judiciary over control orders against terror suspects. On an international level anti-terror raids and trials abroad as well as the fight against Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan received substantial coverage.
- *The war in Iraq:* The growing insurgency in Iraq, the fighting between Iraqi factions as well as between Iraqis and coalition forces was covered on an almost daily basis. It was reported in terms of events in Iraq, e.g., the trial of Saddam Hussein and bomb explosions; changes in military strategy; and the political pressure the situation exerted on US President Bush and British Prime Minister Blair.

Especially when British soldiers were injured or died in fighting, Iraq became the top story of the day.

- *The war in Afghanistan*: Similar to the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan was consistently covered and regularly received top story status, especially when British soldiers were injured or died.
- *The social cohesion of Britain*: The question over the social fabric, the state of *multiculturalism* and *cohesion* of the UK became a consistent talking point during the monitoring period. This was sometimes led by politicians raising the issue; at times it was covered through in-depth pieces not tied to an obvious current event. A newspaper column by Jack Straw, Labour MP and Leader of the House of Commons was one of the key events that sparked off substantial coverage. In the column he had expressed misgivings about Muslim women wearing veils in his constituency surgery. For more self-generated coverage the *BBC News* series 'Changing Face of Britain' is as a good example. Topics in this series included: segregated schools, the Hindu community, the impact of *immigration*, and the state of mental health in Britain.
- *Climate change*: This topic was consistently covered on a global as well as a national level. *Climate change* played a role in terms of the water shortages in the southwest of England especially during the July '06 heat-wave. Both *BBC News* and *ITV News* ran series of in-depth pieces on the global dimension of *climate change*. The documentary on *climate change* 'An Inconvenient Truth' by former US Vice-President Al Gore, which was released during the monitoring period, was also reported on extensively.
- *The football World Cup in Germany*: Even weeks before official kick-off in early June, the football World Cup received substantial coverage. The injury of footballer Wayne Rooney, the search for a new England coach and the general preparations for the event were reported on consistently. During the competition coverage at times dominated news. After the Portuguese team knocked the English team out of the competition in the quarter-finals

coverage was scaled back to an extent, but the topic remained prominent.

- *Top Gear presenter crash*: The car crash of Richard Hammond, one of the presenters of the BBC programme *Top Gear*, while filming a segment for the show in late September received substantial and sustained coverage over several days and at various points later on.

Other key stories with a lesser but still strong impact during the monitoring period:

- *illegal migration* to the EU from Africa;
- EU migration and expansion;
- the affair of Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott over his relationship with the; owner of the London Millennium Dome;
- Tony Blair's new policy towards nuclear power;
- The so-called cash for Honours inquiry;
- animal rights campaigns and animal rights extremism;
- David Cameron reform of the Conservative Party;
- the split-up of Sir Paul McCartney and Heather Mills-McCartney;
- the extradition to 3 British NatWest bankers to the USA to face charges in connection with the collapse of the Enron company;
- the fatal shooting at Amish school in Pennsylvania;
- the row over Madonna's adoption of a Malawi boy;
- Iran's alleged attempts to develop nuclear weapons;
- North Korea's alleged nuclear missile tests;
- Pope Benedict XVI's travels in Poland, Spain and Germany and the ensuing controversy over some of his comments regarding Islam;

- knife crime in Britain

## ***Running Orders***

To illustrate how the news coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues becomes part of a complex network of collocations within individual news programmes this section will take a closer look at the running orders on 25 July 2006. An analysis of the running orders highlights how the different programmes run on a very similar diet of news (see Appendix III for a table showing the running orders side-by-side).

On 25 July 2006 the Home Office announced that it would restructure the border controls system. Measures such as exit checks would be introduced and entry checks tightened. The announcement was part of a wider reform of the Home Office in response to claims and a general perception that the *Home Office was in chaos* (see Case Study I). The asylum system and *illegal immigration* were cited in the news programmes as specific areas these measures were supposed to ‘help’ with. *Channel 4 News*, *BBC News at 10* and *ITV News* covered the story, and their running orders are shown in detail in Appendix III. *Sky News at 10* did not mention the Home Office announcement. When comparing the running orders, it is important to bear in mind the different times and length of the broadcasts. *Channel 4 News* runs almost twice as long as *BBC News* and *ITV News*, hence is likely to cover a higher number of news stories.

Overall, this scarcity of a wide variety of news leads to programmes that rely on very similar patterns. Clearly, the effect on an individual member of the audience watching a particular news item is difficult to measure. What can be said, though, is that experiencing similar patterns of news will over time have a cumulative effect in constructing certain seemingly ‘common-sense’ connections. The concept map is an example of connections made from within news items, programme segments that regularly mention *asylum*. Another concept map could be drawn, showing the wider network constructed by entire news programmes.

## Interviews with journalists

News coverage is the result of a complex production process. By interviewing journalists, the research team was able to gain a better understanding of the structures, pressures, decisions, expectations, attitudes and logistics that influence this process – the when, why and how of *asylum* and *refugee* coverage. In all, 8 journalists were interviewed: 4 from the BBC and 4 from ITN. Of the latter, 2 work for *ITV News*, the other 2 for *Channel 4 News*. The interviews took place after a substantial part of the media monitoring work had been carried out and were informed by the preliminary analysis of the coverage. Due to time constraints on part of the journalists, the interviews varied in length from 40 minutes to 2 hours. To get the most out of the limited time available, the research team adapted a prepared set of questions depending on the journalist's area of expertise and role in the newsroom. All interviews covered the following 7 partially overlapping core areas: attitudes, news values, narratives, production processes, sources, language, and images. In the following section the findings for each of the areas will be summarised.

### **Attitudes**

The attitudes and beliefs of journalists about *asylum* and *refugee* issues as well as the assumptions journalists make about the attitudes and beliefs of their audiences inevitably shape coverage. Most journalists shared a belief that there are 'deserving' and 'undeserving' asylum seekers and that the system was not adequate to deal with alleged 'abuses' of the asylum system.

Several expressed a strong concern for those with a 'justified claim' in terms of the "moral" obligation of the UK to take them in and contrasted this with the problems the system may create for them. In general, though, they expressed a suspicion that many asylum seekers were in truth economic migrants without a moral rights to claim *asylum*. One journalist said:

"*Asylum* clearly is about society respecting its obligation as citizens of the world and looking after people in torment and so on. However, there genuinely was and is quite a lot of abuse of that asylum system." (our emphasis)

Moreover some suggested that the asylum system had been abused by criminal gangs and terrorist groups. One suggested: "Some of them [terrorists] have used the asylum system to get into the country. It's the easiest cover for them."

Based on this understanding, several journalists also saw a connection between *asylum* and *legal* as well as *illegal immigration*, and between *asylum* and *multiculturalism* as well as *social cohesion*. They also appeared to perceive asylum as part of a wider context of *immigration*. When asked about the importance of *asylum* and *refugee* stories to the overall newsroom agenda, one journalist, for instance, responded: "All stories to do with *immigration* are very high on the agenda." (our emphasis)

Some, especially BBC, journalists expressed a concern that their experience of living in cosmopolitan London was divorced from the experiences of *immigration* the main part of their audiences had. While the journalists perceived their audiences to be neither anti-*asylum* nor anti-*immigration*, they did see their audience as being critical towards unfounded asylum claims, as believing that the government fails to control *immigration*, as feeling somewhat under threat and as having a sense, that politicians and the media had underplayed the issue. One journalist said:

"The public is not confident, in crude terms, that those who should be here are here and those that shouldn't, aren't. And until and unless they are confident you almost can't have a wider debate. Because they are just like: get it sorted! You know – It's vital to the issue of fairness, the notion that those who play by the rules benefit and those who don't, don't. And central to the issue of *immigration* and *asylum* is the undermining of the notion of fairness." (our emphasis)

And:

"People feel there is a conspiracy. There is a wide spread sense among the audience of a conspiracy of the liberal ruling class to lie to them about this issue [*immigration*], because they don't live in these places. It isn't your school, your doctors, your street that is affected by immigration. " (our emphasis)

These differences in perspective, as well as a fear of being called racist, some suggested, may have led to an inadvertent, subconscious bias in their coverage in the past that was more positively inclined towards *immigration*. While none wanted to 'pander' to their audience, especially BBC journalists felt that they needed to reflect its concerns more. Some journalists at the BBC mooted that the parts of the press, in particular the tabloid press had been more acute to these concerns in their coverage of *immigration*. One said:

"Some of the newspapers, I think, have been way ahead of us, albeit on their terms. And I don't always approve of the tone and the way they have done it. But they have been much closer to understanding the things that were getting to their readers than perhaps we have been. We have been a bit too coy about engaging with these issues. And I think we were wholly wrong to do that."

This element of 'self-suspicion' expressed by journalists that they had been somehow 'too liberal-minded' or reluctant to engage with the 'real' issues with which their audience were concerned emerged quite strongly in the reflections of some of the journalists we interviewed. Interestingly, this included the assertion that the story of *immigration* had been 'missed' somehow, while the tabloids had not allowed this to happen. From the examples provided to us, often it was clear that journalists were thinking about EU migration quite specifically when they conveyed these ideas. However, a rather contradictory picture emerges from the question of when journalists conceive of *asylum* and *immigration* being 'linked' as issues, and when they do not (a point to which we will return in the *News Values and Narratives* section below).

It should be noted, however, that some journalists expressed misgivings that the current situation could lead to overcompensation. One journalist suggested that the main attitude had already become downright anti-*immigration*, expressing a committed reluctance to 'buy into it'. That journalist said:

"I am working on the basis that *immigration* is not bad. But I am working against an entire ethos that says it is. And that ethos appears in all shapes." (our emphasis)



## ***News Values and Narratives***

News values can be very specific as well as rather abstract parameters that influence a journalist's decision to cover a particular story. In the interviews the journalists maintained that these were the same for *asylum* and *refugee* issues as they were for any other topic. One said: "I have a gut instinct. I call the editor. She has a gut instinct. We agree." Besides "gut feeling" other aspects mentioned were: an exclusive aspect, a new aspect, human drama, as well as an assumed audience's interest, empathy or concern.

Each of the journalists placed their own emphasis on one or two of these aspects. So while some would look for human drama, others would shy away from it, preferring perhaps an approach based on statistics and numbers. What complicates the picture is the aspect of timeliness. So *why cover asylum on a particular day?* What is different today from yesterday? Some journalists described the asylum system as an ongoing process without timely events that would fit the profile of the news programme. One said:

"With *asylum* and *immigration* these things are ongoing, you know. The *immigration* story is not now. So the question is when do we go on the national news with it and talk about these things? That is the question." (our emphasis)

One journalist claimed, however, to be able to find or create a timely peg whenever needed:

"If we wanted to do tomorrow something about the asylum system, I could find half a dozen perfectly reasonable pegs why we should do that story tomorrow – always, it's not a problem. So the idea of a story - it's a nonsense in a way. Most of the stuff we do are not 'stories' - they are pre-planned parts of lobbying operations."

Another aspect mentioned by several journalists is a belief in a cyclical nature of news. Certain topics take over the limelight for a while and have to overcome a lower threshold to get on the programme. These topics usually shift over time. The cycles can be longer and shorter. Journalists agreed that *asylum* was not, at the time of our interviews, on top of a cycle in its own right. One said:

"News is quite cyclical ... Suddenly there will be a lot of stories on a particular issue, so for example anti-social behaviour and ASBOS. And there will be a whole rush on that and it will go quiet for a while. And suddenly something else will spark of a load of interest in that. And in some respects *asylum* is similar. And I think one of the issues, certainly what's quite interesting over the period that you've been monitoring is that because *terror* and *terrorism* stories and *terror*-related stories have been so high up the agenda and *social cohesion* and kind of the whole role of Islam a liberal democracy, all those issues have dominated. And they have forced lots of other things not off the agenda. It's just that you have a limited amount of time to do stories and I think that sometimes what happens is that if one story dominates ... you lose sight of other things, not just of asylum – guns, drugs." (our emphasis)

This corresponds with the data from the media monitoring, which suggests that *asylum* is regularly mentioned but not the focus of coverage. It is, however, connected to other topics, themes and narratives. However, what this journalistic idea of a 'news cycle' obscures are the forces which actually operate to determine the selection and construction of news stories. From this, it might almost seem as if particular stories 'spark interest' and become especially valued or dominant themes in the news because of some kind of objective 'laws of nature', rather than any social or political dynamic or relations of power, such as the announcement of policy proposals from elite politicians immediately making the news headlines. These aspects rather than a 'law of nature' might determine that particular news stories are propelled to positions of importance in the news agenda.

In this light, the fact that *immigration* was described as a previously underreported topic that most journalists saw connected with *asylum* and gave priority, deserves further attention. BBC journalists in particular expressed a feeling that it had neither been covered enough nor critically enough and that they had been encouraged to report on it more extensively. One said:

"In my view the media underplayed the significance of *asylum* and *immigration* as issues 5 to 10 years ago ... When then Conservative-leader William Hague raised it,

there was a liberal media response saying that this was either some form of extremism or some form of *racism* or, if it wasn't, it was designed to pander to it. And that it didn't play to the electorate. I think, what you've seen in recent times is a realization that actually the liberal media were out of touch with what most of their readers, viewer and listeners were concerned about in terms of *immigration* and *asylum*. And there's a process of 'catch up' on those issues, there is heightened awareness in relation to those issues. Precisely because the media had been slow to cover them. That obviously has its own dangers – that you overcompensate." (our emphasis)

Journalists also felt justified to employ *asylum* in the context of a *system in crisis*. One said:

"There was similarly a management crisis in terms of just an inability to manage the number of people claiming *asylum* to the government's own test. Forget of whether you thought there should be more or less – that wasn't the point. They set the policy. They couldn't do it. So in those terms, I think, so long as *crisis* is used narrowly, you can justify it. If it is used broadly, it's pejorative, it's subjective and it creates an impression that it shouldn't." (our emphasis)

The narrative of a *Home Office in chaos* was the strongest example of the *system in crisis* theme during the period (see Case Study I).

## **Sources**

Accessibility and reliability were the key factors cited by the journalists, influencing the selection of sources. A source needs to be available at often short notice, either in person to be interviewed or in terms of having information of interest to the journalist ready to go. An interview partner in Newcastle is of little use to journalists in London who may have to finish their pieces in a couple of hours. Neither can they wait for information ready by lunchtime tomorrow, when they have to go on air tonight. Also, the journalists need to be able to rely on this information and on a potential interviewee to give succinct answers or statements. Sources that can provide this access and information can over time become a trusted source, a

regular point of call for the journalists when they cover particular issues.

For *asylum* and *refugee* as well as *immigration* stories the starting point for most stories is the Home Office. The politics and policy focus that currently frames these issues ensures that elite sources are most often used. So after the initial Home Office response, it is often MPs who get a word in next. Then journalists often turn to interest groups. In terms of using refugees and asylum seekers as sources, most journalists acknowledged a general willingness but cited several difficulties: access, communication problems, as well as fears by asylum seekers and refugees to be identified and suffer repercussions. Most journalists only thought of asylum seekers and refugees as sources for human interest-based stories and did not mention the possibility of using them to comment on policy.

The interest group mentioned most often by journalists was MigrationWatch UK. In terms of accessibility and reliability this organisation has established itself quite strongly in recent years. According to some journalists, it was the organisation's predictions on migration from the 2004 EU accession states, which proved correct, that boosted its standing. Journalists also mentioned the reliability of the MigrationWatch spokesman, off-screen as well as on, and his ability to appear on camera in central London at short notice as factors. Some journalists, though, acknowledged being wary of the organisation's political agenda. One does not use them at all because of it. Most journalists said they used it on a regular basis, either for access to or a different explanation of data, or to provide a statement. One said:

"The other person I talk to quite a bit about, in fairness, is Andrew Green of MigrationWatch, who is much attacked, but actually is more across the statistics than virtually any of the political or other commentators on it. And he's actually a real gentleman, so I happily talk to him. He's also very easy. He's also always very keen to talk."

Another said:

"I have gone to MigrationWatch, despite the fact that they're considered by some persona non grata, because some of their research has been worthwhile as long as you approach them with caution. They are a lobbying group a

pressure group. They got a view. But...most of the people I deal with have a non-objective view of the world."

In terms of interest groups on the other end of the spectrum, most journalists were able to come up with a few suggestions, such as the Refugee Council, but emphasised that there was no regular point of call. Several thought that these organisations had sometimes little understanding of the journalists' requirements in terms of time pressures and general production processes. One journalist said:

"What organisations should do is making journalists' lives easier. Stop telling them what their attitudes are. Stop lecturing people. And just say: if you want to illustrate this - did you see that documentary the other night. ... Most people will want an easy life and these guys know a lot. And once they become known as organisations that help you do your job rather than hector you for your opinions, people will go to them more often. Provide people with examples. Do that before you say: incidentally, you shouldn't use Sangatte anymore. I just think you build a relationship."

One journalist suggested that journalists used to overemphasise the 'liberal' agenda, because it used to be their own. Now that the agenda and many journalists' position had shifted (see section on news values above), it was important to give voice to the other side of the debate. One said:

"This [a pro-*asylum* or *immigration* view] was the conventional wisdom: The view of the charities was also the view of mainstream politics. It's also in the last year or two that mainstream politics has reacted to public's view. So now there is the gap." (our emphasis)

Some also admitted that they would have never thought of Oxfam as a point of call for *asylum* and *refugee* issues.

## **Language**

In television news, pictures and commentary are often put together in a few hours under extreme time pressure. Still, during the monitoring period the research team found no instances of journalists using incorrect terms such as *illegal asylum seeker*. So in terms of language, the research team asked the journalists about

the mentions of a person's immigration status in general, the terminology of *crisis* used in connection with *asylum*, as well as using the term *asylum* in situations that lead to an association with other terms such as *crime* and *terrorism*.

None of the journalists were aware of any specific guidelines their respective organisations have in terms of somebody's immigration status. The general rule was to give as much information about a person as possible. On the other hand, they suggested as a guiding principle that the information should be relevant: they generally agreed that they would mention immigration status, if they thought it was relevant to the story. Journalists had no hard and fast rule of relevance, though. Instead they explained that they make decisions on a case by case basis. Some journalists tried to define relevance by giving a series of examples. Coincidentally, most examples related to *crime*. One said:

"We'd mention it, if it was relevant and not, if we didn't feel it was. It's difficult to answer: Someone's committed a *crime* and they are an *illegal immigrant*. It's relevant. You know. In the current political climate, you feel, it's - unless it is, you know, unless they committed a parking offence then it's clearly not relevant, you know what I mean." (our emphasis)

One journalist, however, suggested that editors would expect a mention of someone's immigration status not in relation to *crime* but in stories about *terrorism*. That journalist said:

"Their status would be irrelevant to me, if I was interviewing him about banking or about sentencing or paedophiles or, you know *criminal justice* or *crime*. It would be totally irrelevant to me. If they are in court on a terrorist charge or something like that, then it becomes more relevant that they may be an *illegal immigrant* or come in illegally, because they're exploiting the system and that becomes relevant." (our emphasis)

This as well as mentioning *asylum* in connection with a *crisis in government* or a *Home Office in chaos* (see Case Study I for more information, also see 'News Values and Narratives' above) ties in with wider questions of collocation, i.e., *asylum* frequently being mentioned with other themes to the point where these connections

seem natural. Some journalists accepted that they mention *asylum* in connection with *crisis*, but felt justified to do so. Most, however, emphasised that they did not believe that *asylum* itself was in *crisis*, only the system. Some also warned media researchers not to put too much emphasis in talk of *crisis*, since journalists may use the term *crisis* loosely and perhaps too quickly. One said:

“The media doesn’t need for anything very big to be happening before the word *crisis* gets invoked to describe it. And I think that’s just general media exaggeration.” (our emphasis)

## ***Images***

During monitoring, the research team noticed that many pieces mentioning *asylum* and *refugee* issues contained a substantial proportion of library or archival footage, graphics or apparently fresh footage of Home Office buildings. The footage is usually chosen by the correspondent or the producer. They call on the library to pull up a selection of footage from the archives. Graphics, such as the backgrounds to PowerPoint-style presentations, are usually put together by separate designers.

The prevalent types of footage observed during the monitoring period related to a number of topics: prisons, prison life, deportations, everyday street scenes, law enforcement work, border control work and office work. What the team did find less frequently was footage of individual refugees and asylum seekers that was relevant to a particular story.

Most journalists agreed that it was difficult in general to illustrate *asylum* and *refugee* stories. They explained that asylum seekers and refugees themselves often did not like to be filmed (see also section on ‘Sources’). Even with library footage some journalists highlighted concerns about privacy rights and broadcasting rules. One, though, also suggested that the prevalence of library footage was due to a certain level of “laziness”. The prevalence of footage of Home Office buildings was explained with the argument that most of these stories originated at the Home Office and were covered from there or by political correspondents. This made these shots the easy and logical option.

Logistical considerations in terms of time, human resources and money also play a part according to some journalists. One journalist explained that if something is not the top story it may not be allocated extra funds to go out and shoot fresh footage. The journalist said:

“And they [the editors] have the dilemma of only having a very limited resource. So they only commit that if they think that is a lead story; I really want it to look special. Otherwise it’s the library. ”

This was also a reason given for rarely covering the story of a *failed asylum seeker* after deportation. Journalists stressed the huge cost and possible danger to follow deportees abroad.

Some, though, emphasised that there are many other topics that are equally difficult to illustrate. Still, most journalists acknowledged that this has led to a reliance on library footage. Some journalists accepted that this might be problematic, but did not see another way at this point.

## ***Production processes***

Either by appearing onscreen or through their commentary, journalists often come across as the sole creators of a piece. What became clear from the interviews, however, was that a journalist may take the lead role, but a number of people and the institutional practices and structures of the production process have a substantial influence on the final output.

The assignment process varies depending on the organisation, the standing and seniority of a correspondent. Shift rotas and other stories also have to be considered in deciding who actually covers a story on any given day. There may be several people or layers of hierarchy involved in putting a particular story on air.

Correspondents may suggest pieces to their editor, e.g., the Home Affairs or Home News editor, or their editors may suggest story to them. That story maybe based on a press release, a press release that may have been forwarded to this editor by his or her assistant. The assistant probably received several dozen other press releases, but for some reason selected this one (for possible reasons see section on ‘News Values and Narratives’ above). The section editor



also has to liaise with the on-the-day programme editor or even the top editor.

Once the story is assigned some journalists continue to co-ordinate with their editor either through meetings or by phone throughout the day. Normally the editor would also co-ordinate between journalists who cover different aspects of the same story. More senior correspondents may have the help of an assistant to find sources or information. At times other journalists may film statements for a piece. Once the material is in, the correspondents put the pieces together with the help of video editors and at times their producer. Depending on their personal dynamic each of them may suggest image sequences or wording. One journalist described the process such:

“In the edit suite between me and the producer, often the video tape editor, we are very collegiate about the way we work down here and work as an organisation, you know. I’ll have a view. Producer will have a view. Video editor will have a view. Programme editor will have a view....In the kind of day-to-day programme editorial process it tends to be the programme editor and me and the people I have outlined, but you tend to have a big debate about what is ok to say and what isn’t.”

To integrate individual packages or pieces in the overall programmes, anchors may suggest their own introductions or use suggestions from correspondents. An editor will most likely review them. Titles and headlines are often written by another editor, again with possible input from correspondents or producers.

Job-titles may differ from organisation to organisation. Nor is this an exhaustive schema of the process. But what this section illustrates is the complexity of the production process, as it was portrayed by the journalists.

### ***Outlook: The Link Between ‘Asylum’ and ‘Immigration’***

The journalists who participated in our interviews work in a range of positions and areas of broadcast news and, as such, their coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues emerges from within a range of different news contexts. Their insights and reflections upon their

own practices enabled the research team to gain a better understanding of the professional and institutional forces and constraints within which broadcast journalism operates. Besides affording a valuable perspective into the production process, the interviews also raised several intriguing and in some respects surprising and to some extent contradictory issues, reaching beyond the production process.

Firstly, whilst *asylum* was identified as having somewhat 'dropped off of the agenda' in recent years, journalists readily acknowledged that it had been a 'hot topic' for news, especially in the early 2000s. However, they did not necessarily connect this 'hot topic phase' of *asylum* news with the coverage of *immigration* issues in general. Rather, the point was made by more than one journalist that *immigration* issues had not featured as much as they *should* have in the broadcast news agenda. In their general responses, some journalists clearly perceived *asylum* to be part of the wider context of *immigration* issues, but this did not seem to apply to their recollection of this earlier period of intensive *asylum* coverage. It seemed to us that there was an interesting contradiction here in journalistic perceptions of the relationship between *asylum* and *immigration* as areas of reporting, and in the factors influencing whether they would be regarded as essentially part of 'the same story' or alternatively, as separate in their meaningfulness.

If *asylum* and *immigration* were essentially connected as areas of news, and with *asylum* having been regarded a 'hot topic' in the early 2000s – How, then, could journalists feel that *immigration* been consistently underplayed as a news story and therefore 'missed'? One possible answer can be deduced from the interview responses: it becomes clear from the responses that journalists implicitly differentiate between various forms of *immigration*, that there are multiple 'lines' across which *asylum* and *immigration* are separated and connected. At times differentiation between *asylum* and *immigration* seems 'logical'. Stories about workers from EU accession states are not the same as stories about *asylum*, which at any rate has 'fallen off the agenda'. At other times, though, an equivalence drawn between *asylum* and *immigration* seems to make 'common sense', for example in areas incompetently handled by the Home Office.

The shifting 'connection' and 'separation' of these issues, is itself a symptom of the shifting web of ideas within which *asylum* and *immigration* are constructed as meaningful objects of news at different points in time. What is maintained within this web is a conceptual 'space' at the centre of the news agenda. This space can be filled either by *asylum* or *immigration*. What takes the space depends upon the particular configuration of ideas deemed newsworthy or important at the time. The stories concerned with EU migration, for example, which several journalists drew extensively upon in their responses, are merely what occupies the conceptual 'space' of *immigration* at present. In the early 2000s, *asylum* occupied this very space. Prior to this, it could be argued, non-white immigration from New Commonwealth countries fulfilled this 'filling' function. From this perspective, therefore, it seems strange and somewhat unhistorical to suggest that *immigration* 'was missed' or 'not being covered' until very recently.

The different focus points and meanings of *asylum* and *immigration* are determined by a complex set of social and political relations, which extend beyond the news media and their 'agendas'. As such, journalists' assumptions about the connection or disconnection between *asylum* and *immigration* have potentially profound consequences. To assume a strict separation, as suggested by the seemingly influential *immigration story missed* idea expressed in several of the journalists reflexive responses, seems to us to somewhat 'gloss over' the way in which different stories about *immigration* and *asylum* can recall and revitalise familiar prejudicial ideas related to either. The *danger of overcompensation* in response to an *immigration story missed*, seem especially salient in this context.

*What is maintained within this web is a conceptual 'space' at the centre of the news agenda. This space can be filled either by 'asylum' or 'immigration'. What takes the space depends upon the particular configuration of ideas deemed newsworthy or important at the time.*

## Quantitative findings

### ***Introduction***

The data drawn upon for the quantitative analysis was compiled from the programmes *Channel 4 News* at 7 pm, *BBC 1 News* at 10 pm, *ITV 1 News* at 10.30 pm, and *Sky News* at 10 pm. The research team closely monitored the four programmes from 24 April to 31 July 2006. The team extracted all segments that mentioned the word *asylum* or *refugee* either verbally or visually for later coding and analysis using SPSS (see also 'Methodology' section).

Monitoring continued until 24 October, but the data collected was not included in the quantitative sample.

### ***Understanding the Data***

The understanding of the data presented in the graphs and tabs rests on these four numbers: 65, 318, 105, and 213. They represent different subsets of the data.

- 65 is the number of items that contain an explicit reference to *asylum*. Items represent the 'umbrella' level of analysis. They combine all the units of analysis of a news story on any given day. For example: any part of the coverage on *Channel 4 News* on 25 April that dealt with the '*foreign prisoners* deportation row' made up one item. This item was relevant, because the number of *failed asylum seekers* involved in the issue was mentioned in this context. It is possible that a news programme has more than one relevant item on any given day: *Channel 4 News* carried another item on *asylum* on 25 April. The second one dealt with the story of a terror suspect, who had been granted *asylum* but was under threat of being deported. The news programme did not establish a connection between the row over *foreign prisoners* and the situation of the terror suspect, hence they were deemed to be two separate items.
- In total the 65 items consist of 318 units of analysis. The number of units per item varies. Some only have 1 unit, some have 4 or 6. The maximum number of units for an item in the sample turned out to be 12. The example on *foreign prisoners* mentioned above has 9 units. In this case

and in terms of their respective format, they are in order of appearance: teaser, teaser, anchor intro, package, standard interview, headline recap, teaser, headline recap, images/graphic over title/credits

- The 318 units of analysis are made up of two groups: a) 105 units that contain an explicit mention of *asylum/refugee* and b) 213 units that do not contain such a mention. In the above example only 1 unit of the 9 had an explicit mention and was coded through. The research team treated these two groups differently. The coders applied a limited coding schema to the 213 units. This scheme allows the researchers to make certain statements about the relation between *asylum* and other themes.
- To the remaining 105 units of analysis, the research team applied the entire coding schema. These units are the basis for the analysis of parameters such as labels, sources, images, and *asylum*-related themes.

Depending on the relevance to the questions, the tables and graphs use the different data sets. So bearing these four numbers 65, 318, 105 and 213 in mind will help with understanding the data. Further irregularities that may occur will be explained at the appropriate point.

## ***Data Dispersal***

Overall the terms *asylum* and *refugee* were mentioned in only 2.3% of total coverage from 24 April to 31 July 2006. Though no coverage bursts occurred, there were periods where the coverage was more prominent. May was the peak month with a notable higher count of relevant items than June and July (quantitative sample period) as well as August, September and October (see Appendix II: Table 1 for the split between months and programmes, Table 3 for the number of units per channel). It is likely that the key contributors to this peak were the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* and the controversy over the government's apparent ignorance over the number of *illegal immigrants* in the UK.

*Channel 4 News* was the programme that mentioned the terms *asylum* and *refugee* most often. This may have to do with the longer

format (approx. 55 mins.) when compared to the other programmes (approx 27-35 mins.).

## ***Key Findings***

- *Asylum* and *refugee* issues are regularly mentioned but less often the focus of news coverage. The data for main theme on the item-level as well as the unit-level confirm this. Of the 65 items only 14, just over one fifth have *asylum* as their main theme. On the unit level *asylum* scores even lower. *Asylum* as a main theme only applies to 26, just over 8% of the 318 units.
- *Asylum* and *refugee* issues are often mentioned in connection with other themes that usually have a negative connotation. *Home Office in chaos* was the dominant theme during the coding period: 25 items, just below 40% had this as their main theme. On the unit-level it was the main theme for 133, just over 40%. *Government in Crisis*, *crime*, *human rights*, and *illegal immigration* all scored similar to *asylum* between 8% and 10%. Combined, all the non-*asylum* unit main themes made up over 90%. (see Appendix II: Graph 1)
- In terms of themes directly relating to *asylum* (see Appendix II: Table 4) the data shows a shift in focus away from very specific policies, such as cost of asylum seekers on the system (mentioned 2 times), accommodation (3) or other benefits (2), which had been the focus of previous coverage, to the asylum system in general. The 'UK asylum system/process/policy in general' (31), was only topped by 'deportation', which was mentioned in 42 of the 105 cases. Other themes that suggest a more abstract and politics based dimension to the *asylum* discourse, e.g., 'government/Labour spin on numbers' (10), also scored relatively strongly.
- As mentioned above, 'deportation' (mentioned 42 times) was the most commonly mentioned theme relating to *asylum* (see Appendix II: Table 4). Again this could signal a shift in emphasis compared to previous studies, for instance regarding the events in Sangatte studied by Article 19 in 2003 (Buchanan et al). Now less emphasis seems to

be put on 'means of entry' (17) of asylum seekers. This corresponds with a) the government's apparent emphasis on its target of deporting more *failed asylum seekers* than new applications being made and b) its attempt to deport terror suspects.

- The inappropriate use of labels appears to be less common now than previous studies have shown. Labels were used in 80 units, just over three quarters of the 105 units. But hardly any clearly derogatory labels, such as *bogus* or *illegal asylum seeker* were used (see Appendix II: Table 5). Even the term *illegal immigrant*, which had some citations, should be considered with great care. The term was often used in close association, but not necessarily as a straightforward label for asylum seekers. Journalists represent almost three quarters of label usage. Politicians trail a distant second with just below 12%.
- The discussion of *asylum* and *refugee* issues is dominated by elites. Politicians and government officials as well as journalists tend to be the main source in units that explicitly mention *asylum/refugee* issues. Combined they make up more than two thirds of the main sources (see Appendix II: Table 6). Refugee NGOs and pressure groups such as MigrationWatch UK were only coded as the main source one time each. As additional sources NGO/voluntary sector combined with refugee NGOs feature 5 times compared with 8 for pressure group other (see Appendix II: Table 7).
- The language towards asylum seekers/refugees is not usually overtly inflammatory or emotive. Some instances of this type of language by the main source and dominant voice were recorded during coding. But neutral or no reference scored the highest for both.
- Images of asylum seekers and refugees are not commonly part of the coverage, constituting 26.7% of the images coded. However, these images only feature in 36 units of our sample – only 11.3% of the total sample or one third of the units that contain a mention of *asylum* and *refugees*.
- Even in the 26 units that had *asylum* as their main theme, 13 have no images of asylum seekers and refugees. A

further 2 are entirely text based and have no images at all. So, only 11 of these units feature images of asylum seekers and refugees. Because of this, the question of the context of images of asylum seekers/refugees is perhaps of less significance than for previous studies (e.g., Article 19 analysis of the reporting of Sangatte).

- More significantly, the coverage included in our sample often features graphics as well as images of the infrastructure of the asylum system to illustrate a story. The top five most frequent images coded in this category were: text (15.7%); law enforcement work (13.4%); Home Office buildings (12.9%); parliamentary work (7.9%); and prisons/detention centres (6.9%). The tendency to represent the issues in a more abstract rather than 'human' form corresponds with the prevailing political narratives of *government in crisis/Home Office in chaos*, that also emerge from our 'main theme' findings.

A high frequency of reference to the asylum system/process/policy might indicate that a dehumanised narrative characterises the *asylum* coverage. Our findings do suggest that this is an important aspect, but as the following finding shows the picture is far more complex.

- Ostensibly, our results suggest that references to asylum seekers 'as human beings' are the most common way that *asylum* is introduced. There are 47 units referring to asylum seekers/refugees, in comparison to just 24 units which refer solely to the asylum system/policy/process. In addition, there are 34 units which make reference to *both* asylum seekers/refugees and the asylum system/policy/process. However, these figures do not reveal *how* these references to asylum seekers/refugees are actually developed within units and through items (see Appendix II: Table 8).



## **‘Asylum Seekers’, ‘Refugees’ and ‘Evacuees’: Three Case Studies on the Discursive Framework in Broadcast News**

In this part of the report we explore the discursive web represented by the concept map in more qualitative detail. By looking at three case studies, we want to test and add to the findings already developed through quantitative analysis and the interviews with journalists (see respective sections for more detail). Highlighting the finding that *asylum* and *refugee* issues though regularly mentioned were rarely the focus of coverage, case study I looks at the way these issues were implicated in coverage of various news stories relating to a *crisis* narrative – in particular about the *Home Office in chaos*. In contrast, case study II analyses one of the few instances where the coverage was at least in part on *asylum*: the coverage of the so-called *Afghan hijackers* serves as an interesting example of the way the concept of *human rights* is being reframed as a *threat to public safety*. Finally, case study III considers the contradictory usage of the term *refugee* in both domestic and international contexts.

### **Case Study I: ‘Asylum’ – a Symptom of a ‘Home Office in Chaos’**

#### **Covering ‘Asylum’: Out of Focus but in Full View**

*Asylum* was regularly mentioned on television news programmes during the monitoring period. But it was rarely the focus of coverage (see ‘Quantitative Findings’ section for more details). There were several main contexts and themes, such as *crime*, *terrorism*, and *illegal immigration*, as well as certain narratives that *asylum* was most often connected with. The dominant narrative pertaining to *asylum* and *refugee* issues was that of a *Home Office in chaos*.

#### **Out of Control: The ‘Home Office in Chaos’ Narrative**

Compared to other ministries the Home Office used to have a particularly wide area of responsibility. It also has a reputation among journalists for not having a grip on all its responsibilities. The department regularly makes the headlines with controversies, rows

and scandals. Whenever something goes wrong, these events are not merely reported on a case-by-case basis, but are usually considered to be a symptom of this lack of control going back decades, with a focus on the period of the Blair government. Any negative event is usually reported as a symptom of a *Home Office in chaos*. Since the end of the monitoring period the Home Office has been split up. But the verdict still seems to be out as to whether anything has really changed.

In terms of narrative, the *Home Office in chaos* is not a simple narrative with a beginning, a middle and end. It could be better defined as a soap opera or a cumulative narrative, consisting of a wide number of disjointed strands. Once one *scandal* or *chaotic situation* has been contained another usually picks up. References to names of former officials or events of the past are supposed to link a particular incident into the grand narrative. A full understanding and the ability to order the narrative requires a rather comprehensive knowledge of the Home Office's recent and not so recent history. What complicates the narrative further is the fact that the roles in the narrative are also changing depending on the situation. During the monitoring period, the role of villain was assigned to *foreign prisoners*, so-called *illegal immigrants*, paedophiles, criminals on parole as well as Home Office officials. Because of its disjointed nature this narrative often becomes incoherent and is not easy to grasp or even to follow.

To connect to this narrative journalists do not necessarily use the term *Home Office in chaos*. They speak about the "latest blunder" from the Home Office" (*Newsnight* 25 April 2006); they incorporate visual clues of a department in *chaos*, e.g., one report contained an animation of a Home Office building crumbling under the strain of scandals (*Newsnight* 25 April 2006); journalists also take a historic look at the various scandals (*Sky News* 25 April 2005); or they talk about the many political careers the Home Office has already claimed (*ITV News* 23 May 2006). Presumably, to give the audience a wider context and better understanding, journalists also mention other events or areas that have been or still are symptomatic of the difficulties at the Home Office. Over time, some of them appear to have developed into standard examples. Our analysis suggests that the asylum system has become one of these examples.

The actual topic for the *Home Office in chaos* can shift. In January 2007, after the end of the monitoring period, the topic of the day was the failure by the Home Office to update its databases with information on crimes committed by Britons abroad. Also part of this narrative were the reforms of spring 2007: During the last weeks of the Blair government the Home Office was divided into two ministries, one for justice and one for national security. This *chaos* narrative can also in itself become a symptom. During our sample period the problems at the Home Office were sometimes taken as a symptom of the *Blair government in crisis*, raising a question mark over Tony Blair's future as Prime Minister. But despite these variations the overall narrative of the *Home Office in chaos* framework remains: a ministry so out of control that at times through its incompetence it even puts the British public in danger.

During the monitoring period (24 April to 24 October 2006) two of the key topics covered within the wider framework of a *Home Office in chaos* related to the field of *immigration*: the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* and the controversy over the numbers of *illegal immigrants*. These two topics were selected because of their dominance. Other topics and themes such as EU migration, *re-balancing the criminal justice system*, *human rights*, or the *fight against terrorism* were also covered by the programmes and often related to the *chaos* narrative. Some background information on the two examples is given below.

### **Background: Foreign prisoners' deportation row/illegal immigrants' numbers game**

According to Home Office policy, foreign nationals who spend time in a British prison for criminal offences are supposed to be considered for deportation upon their release. In the events referred to as the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* the Home Office failed to consider such people for deportation in just over 1000 cases. The origins of this row date back beyond the scope of the sampling period. It was kicked off by a question raised by Conservative MP Richard Bacon in a committee hearing in 2005. The footage of the session suggests that the question, or part of the question, specifically related to *failed asylum seekers* who happened to have committed a crime and were sent to prison (*BBC News* 25 April 2006; *Channel 4 News* 25 April 2006). At the time the civil servant before the committee did not have the answers at hand. It took the

Home Office until 25 April 2006 to compile the data and release it. In the following weeks the story remained one of the top stories on the monitored news programmes.

The perceived failure of then-Home Secretary Charles Clarke to deal with the *foreign prisoners* deportation eventually led to him leaving the cabinet in the wake of Labour's losses at the English local elections on 4 May. During this wider reshuffle of the cabinet on 5 May John Reid became the new Home Secretary. On the basis of Reid's reputation as 'The Enforcer' journalists interpreted the appointment as a sign that he was to sort out the perceived mess at the Home Office. Without the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* fully resolved, however, the next alleged 'mess' started to make headlines: *illegal immigration*.

*Illegal immigration* is in itself a recurring theme. As defined by media coverage various groups of people come in under this heading. They include *failed asylum seekers*, visa over-stayers and others who according to the journalists have no legal right to stay in the UK. During the sampling period the theme rose to particular prominence for a while, due to comments made by the Home Office's head of enforcement and removals, Dave Roberts, to the Home Affairs Committee on 16 May. When quizzed by MPs about the number of *illegal immigrants* in Britain he started his response by saying, "I don't have the faintest idea." Though he immediately qualified this statement somewhat by stating that he was aware of the research in this area and gave an estimate, the political damage had been done. The next day, 17 May, Tony Blair came under pressure during Prime Minister's Question Time, defending his government's performance on *illegal immigration*.

In terms of coverage it is interesting to note that initially Roberts' comments generated only limited coverage in our sample. It was Blair's performance during Prime Minister's Question Time that put *illegal immigration* towards the top of the agenda for most of the programmes. Later the topic acquired a life of its own with several spin off stories generating coverage over the following days. Later in the week, for instance, *Channel 4 News* broke a story on *illegal immigrants* working in a Home Office building as cleaners.

The two storylines, the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* and the *illegal immigration* controversy culminated in an appearance by the new Home Secretary John Reid before the Home Affairs Committee.

Specifically referring to the immigration service, but seemingly implicating the wider situation at the Home Office, John Reid called his department “not fit for purpose”. He described the data coming out of the department as unreliable and management as well as communication structures as inadequate. His comments were seen by many journalists as an honest assessment of the Home Office and confirmed the *Home Office in chaos* narrative.

### **Putting Pressure on the System: Asylum Seekers, ‘Foreign Prisoners’, and ‘Illegal Immigrants’**

In this section the way *asylum* and *refugee* issues became a symptom of a *Home Office in chaos* is explored by looking at the news coverage of the *foreign prisoners’ deportation row* and the controversy over *illegal immigration* around three key dates: 25 April, 16 May and 17 May, as well as 23 May 2005. The first date represents the very beginning of the *foreign prisoners’ deportation row*. On the second date Dave Roberts had to admit that he did not have the “faintest idea” about the number of *illegal immigrants* in the UK. The following day Tony Blair had to defend his government’s policy over *illegal immigration*. The final date relates to Home Secretary John Reid declaring his department “not fit for purpose”.

For this analysis the data consists not only of main data drawn from the monitoring material (see ‘Methodology’ section for more detail on data collection), i.e., *Channel 4 News*, *BBC 1 News at 10*, *ITV 1 News at 10.30*, and *Sky News at 10*, but also from contextual material collected from BBC 2’s *Newsnight*, as well as the Radio 4 programmes *Today* and *World at One*. The *Today* programme was monitored for one hour between 7.30 and 8.30 am, Monday to Friday. In each case additional information is taken from the running orders covering the entire broadcast. In each case the programmes have been analysed in terms of themes, narratives, language and where appropriate images to highlight similarities and differences. The order of analysis for the regular material follows the order of broadcast, i.e., *Channel 4 News*, which airs at 7 pm, *BBC News*, which airs at 10 pm at the same time as *Sky News*, and finally *ITV 1 News*, which airs at 10.30. The analysis of these programmes is followed by an overview of the contextual material.

First a few general observations: throughout the coverage and across all the channels the following images were used frequently:

archival footage relating to Home Office stationery, footage of Home Office buildings, archival footage of deportations, and archival footage of prison life as well as prison buildings. Many stories contained elements of PowerPoint-style animation, especially when listing historical events or citing numbers. Besides the prevalence of certain images, another important general observation relates to sources. Most sources tended to be politicians, government officials, the Home Office and representatives of interest groups.

## **Channel 4 News**

*Channel 4 News*' coverage strongly framed the controversies around *foreign prisoners* and *illegal immigration* in the *Home Office in chaos* narrative. In the coverage on 25 April this framework was especially apparent in the trailers, introductions, and headline recaps as well as in an interview with then-Home Secretary Charles Clarke. The programme put the emphasis on the 'systemic failure' at the Home Office, on a "blunder" (*Channel 4 News* anchor Jon Snow) and on the question whether the Home Secretary should resign. Though Charles Clarke had been replaced by John Reid before the onset of the *illegal immigration* controversy the narrative remained similar on 16 and 17 May, as terminology such as "the Home Office's spate of failures" (Jon Snow) and the question, whether the government can "regain control over the Home Office and sort out the mess" (Jon Snow) indicate. On 23 May, the day John Reid declared that the immigration department was "not fit for purpose"; the programme framed its coverage in a way that appeared to confirm the *chaos* narrative. Reid's suggestion to overhaul the immigration department was taken up by the programme and expanded to a reform of the entire Home Office. Throughout the coverage *asylum* was brought in on a regular basis by way of words and images. Sometimes it was merely mentioned, sometimes raised as a reference point, i.e., when it is later expanded on or discussed further.

The opening of the programme on 17 May offers a good example of a minor mention of *asylum* on a visual level: over footage of the debate between David Cameron and Tony Blair in the House of Commons, *Channel 4 News* anchor Jon Snow describes the main story of the day with the words: "Tories claim Labour is in paralysis over *foreign prisoners*, *illegal immigrants* and *human rights*." (our emphasis) This is immediately followed by the title sequence, which

as its first image reveals stock footage of a 'Home Office – National Asylum Support Service – Application form'. The form is followed by a close-up of folders on a shelf, which in turn gives way to the final piece of footage in this opening sequence: a computer screen displaying a deportation letter. Overall the title sequence only lasts approximately 14 seconds. The form is merely visible for a couple of seconds. It is clearly a very minor mention that could have been easily missed by an inattentive viewer. It serves to connote the benefits and bureaucracy associated with *asylum* and to link *asylum* with the *Home Office in chaos* story.

On 25 April, the day the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* broke, a piece by Home Affairs correspondent Simon Israel contained an interesting example of a verbal *and* visual mention of asylum seekers: using by a PowerPoint style graphic the correspondent lists the types of crimes committed by the 1023 convicted foreign nationals released without being considered for deportation: 5 killers, 9 rapists, 39 sex offenders, 204 guilty of violent crimes. The final item on the list shows the statistic that 391 of the total were asylum seekers. This number has the same margins and font size as the crimes listed before, thus visually equating *asylum seeking* with crimes. In the verbal commentary, however, the final item is somewhat set off from the rest. Israel says: "And a breakdown of immigration history reveals that a third of the total were asylum seekers." Grammatically this bullet point is not part of the same sentence as the list of crimes. Still, the correspondent gives no further explanation as to why he has highlighted this group. It may have been the biggest group or it could be explained in light of the knowledge that an initial question directed at the Home Office contained a reference to *failed asylum seekers*. This reference was part of the coverage on other news programmes on this day. However, this is not made explicit here, and the mention simply serves to collocate *asylum* with *chaos and dysfunction at the Home Office*.

So far the examples have shown rather minor mentions of *asylum*. A number of times *asylum* featured more substantially, for instance when *asylum* was cited by journalists as well as sources as an example of failure or success at the Home Office. An interview on May 17 with Tony McNulty, the then Immigration Minister, is an example of a source bringing *asylum* into the discussion: in the segment about the numbers of *illegal immigrants* in the UK,

McNulty defends the Home Office's position by citing the "unholy mess" Labour inherited from the Conservatives in terms of *asylum*. He says that this had to be Labour's first priority and that still more needed to be done there. This suggests that to McNulty a) *asylum* was/is a problem; b) a problem of great urgency/that needs priority; c) the focus on dealing with this problem is partially responsible for negligence in other areas. In this argument *asylum* has thus become not only linked with party politics, but has also turned into an example of, possibly one of the very reasons for the troubles of the Home Office.

## **BBC 1 News at 10**

In a similar way to *Channel 4 News*, *BBC News at 10* framed the events around *foreign prisoners* and *illegal immigrants* in the wider context of a *chaotic Home Office* and a *crisis for the Blair government*: from day one the situation is called a "crisis", "damning indictment of the whole system", a sign of "incompetence" and "deep failings" that puts the Home Secretary under "intense pressure". By 23 May this has led to a "tidal wave of bad headlines" and the need for a "full and fundamental overhaul of the Home Office". In this context *asylum* featured in similar terms as developed above: *asylum* was often mentioned without further explanation or as a reference as above. In these cases there was still a focus on deporting etc. and on the consequent troubles at the Home Office. The coverage, however, also displayed some differences, especially in the usage of archival images as well as footage of political debate and parliamentary work. Though *BBC News* also relied heavily on the use of archival footage, it did not feature explicitly *asylum*-related material, such as the National Asylum Support System – Application form mentioned above. It was more common for *asylum* to become part of the coverage through the selection of footage from committee meetings and political debate.

A package by Nick Robinson from 25 April on the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* contained footage of the same committee meeting featured on *Channel 4 News*. This was the autumn 2005 meeting during which Conservative MP Richard Bacon raised the questions that kicked off the whole series of events. In the footage shown on the BBC, Bacon specifically refers to *failed asylum seekers* in his questions. In his commentary Robinson does not give any further



detail. *Failed asylum seekers* and *foreign criminals* are linked with no real explanation. The only other mention of asylum seekers in that day's programme occurred in a preceding package by Margaret Gilmore: she cites critics who accuse the Home Office of focussing too much on "meeting government targets like cutting *asylum* and reducing the prison population" (our emphasis). So what remains at the end of the programme for an audience appears to be a not fully explained association between *foreign prisoners*, *asylum targets*, *failed asylum seekers* and the *failures of the Home Office*.

The term *failed asylum seeker*, compared to labels that have been common in the past, is relatively neutral. But it still collocates with the whole negative set of epithets, which represent asylum seekers as *not genuine* or *illegal* – hence *failed*. Compared to other studies, we did not find many of the other negative labels for asylum seekers, e.g., *bogus asylum seeker* (see 'Quantitative Findings' section for more detail on use of labels). However, such labels did occur and there is clear evidence that the term *asylum* connotes all these negatives. Similar to the case of Richard Bacon's comments, in one interesting instance it happened through the use of footage of parliamentary debate, i.e., footage that documents events outside the direct control of the journalist. On 17 May, in a package by Nick Robinson the issue of labelling comes up in the context of the *illegal immigrants* controversy: the package first reiterates the events of the previous day, i.e., when Dave Roberts, the head of removals, had to admit that he neither had the "faintest idea" about the number of *illegal immigrants* nor the numbers for *failed asylum seekers* not removed from the country. Further on, the package features footage of the debate between Tony Blair and David Cameron in the House of Commons. In reference to Dave Roberts' testimony, the Tory leader conflates the two terms *illegal immigrant* and *failed asylum seeker* to *illegal asylum seekers*. This label with its negative connotations of illegality is left standing without qualification or explanation. Intentionally or not, both the journalist on the level of media discourses and the politician on the level of the political discourse are reinforcing all the negative stereotypes about *asylum* in one phrase.

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## Sky News at 10

The coverage of these events on *Sky News* also worked within a *Home Office in chaos* narrative: in a two-way on 25 April, for

instance, *Sky News* political correspondent Jon Craig contextualises the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* by referring to previous crises at the Home Office. The ministry represents a "blunder and breakdown" that has gone on for years. It has to be noted, though, that on the core dates used for this case study, *asylum* was not mentioned explicitly in the coverage. On other dates, however, *asylum* was mentioned. On 21 May, for example, the case of a mix up of criminal records was framed as another instance of *chaos at the Home Office*: in the introduction the anchors mention the *foreign prisoners' deportation row*, the *illegal immigration* controversy, the embarrassing revelation that *illegal immigrants* worked at the Home Office, and several cases of terror suspects that happen to have claimed *asylum*. Thus, the coverage of *Sky News* highlights the fact that the connection between *asylum* and a *Home Office in chaos*, though common, was not an inevitable part of the coverage.

## **ITV 1 News at 10.30**

On *ITV News* the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* as well as the *illegal immigration* controversy were also seen within the framework of a *Home Office in chaos*. The '*foreign prisoners*' situation is a "failure on a grand scale" (*ITV News* 25 April 2006). In a trailer on 17 May presenter Mark Austin cites an unnamed minister who describes the situation over *illegal immigrants* with the words: "We are not in control of our borders." On May 23 political editor Tom Bradby calls the Home Office a "shambles" and the graveyard of many a New Labour career. Two particular instances of implicating *asylum* in this coverage are highlighted here: one a rather minor mention of *asylum* as part of a look at tomorrow's front pages; the other, a substantial mention by way of a package that focused on the number of *failed asylum seekers* as an example of *illegal immigration*.

Similar to *Newsnight* and *Sky News at 10*, *ITV News* normally takes a look at tomorrow's front pages at the end of its 10.30 news programme. Usually, three to five headlines from a variety of papers are cited by the presenter. Among the headlines cited on 16 May, one each was from *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Daily Mail*, both relating to *immigration*. Mark Austin summarised them as follows:

"The Telegraph says the UK Immigration Service is in *chaos*. Senior officials told MPs they had not the faintest idea how many people were here illegally. And the Daily Mail leads on the same story: it claims the Home Office has abandoned hope of finding *hundreds and thousands of failed asylum seekers*." (our emphasis)

As is normal for this 'tomorrow's papers' segment, the quotations were not explained any further. It is also interesting to note that on this day the *illegal immigration* story was not covered in any other part of the programme. The associations suggested between the Immigration Service, the Home Office, people in the UK *illegally*, and *failed asylum seekers* produce again a set of negative collocations about *asylum*.

The following day, with David Cameron confronting Tony Blair in the House of Commons over the numbers of *illegal immigrants*, the programme did cover the issue extensively as its main story in two packages as well as in an interview with Tony McNulty, then the Immigration Minister. The first package by political editor Tom Bradby focused on the political debate and tried to show the extent of *illegal immigration*: Bradby uses figures for *failed asylum seekers* as an example. According to these numbers, almost 300 000 *failed asylum seekers* were not deported and could be living in the UK. In the introduction to the package as well as at the beginning of the package itself, the journalists suggest that a) Britain is a soft option for *illegal immigrants* and b) that people come here purely for economic and social security reasons, i.e., to scrounge off the system. Towards the end the package features footage of Tony Blair in a House of Commons debate. There Blair defends his government's position by citing that the numbers of asylum seekers are down and removals are three times the level of 1997. By using the example of *failed asylum seekers* and this particular footage, the package reinforces a similar line of association to the one already mentioned above: asylum seekers as a problem and increasing pressure on the government to deal with it.

## Contextual material

The contextual material serves the purpose of comparing the findings from the main data set: do other programmes work within a similar *Home Office in chaos* narrative? Also, do they connect it to

*asylum*? The clearly rather limited material suggests that the *Today* programme and *Newsnight* both featured the *chaos* narrative strongly. It was less apparent in the *World at One*. What follows is a short overview.

The Home Office released the data relating to the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* on 25 April while the *World at One* programme was on air: correspondent Mike Sergeant had to respond immediately and explains the situation in a two-way. He mentions that the situation was a "failure of the system" to respond to a dramatic rise in the number of foreigners in the prison population. Not a particularly strong evocation of the *chaos* narrative. Also, *asylum* is not mentioned in the broadcast. In the BBC open archive of programme content, though, the segment was listed under the heading "ASYLUM" (open.bbc.co.uk accessed 10 January 2007). By 23 May the narrative has become stronger: on the day John Reid declares his department "not fit for purpose" the presenter talks about "turning around the limbering beast of Whitehall that is the Home Office". In an interview Labour MP John Denham mentions *asylum*. The Home Office, he explains, tries to deal with symptoms, such as *asylum*, but does not tackle the basic structural problems.

The *Today* programme picks up the *foreign prisoners' story* on 26 April: an interview with the then Home Secretary Charles Clarke features many of the characteristics of the *Home Office in chaos* narrative. The "latest revelation about the prison service" is taken as a sign of a failure to reform the Home Office: "Three Home Secretaries and it still hasn't happened." It has to be noted, though, that during the 60 minutes of the *Today* programme monitored on that day *asylum* was not mentioned. But it did come in as part of the coverage of the *illegal immigration row* on 17 May, when *failed asylum seekers* were mentioned.

In *Newsnight* on 25 April, presenter Jeremy Paxman introduces the *foreign prisoners' deportation row* with the words: "As blunders go the latest from the Home Office is pretty toe-curling." In one of the packages relating to this story *Newsnight* political correspondent David Grossman reviews the recent history of scandals at the Home Office and asks whether "this is a picture of organisational *chaos*" (our emphasis). Overall this gave a strong impression of a *Home Office in chaos*. Asylum seekers are mentioned several times in the course of this programme, predominantly by sources. The

programme on 17 May presents a similar picture. Finally, on May 23 the coverage focuses on *failed asylum seekers*. Similar to other programmes, *Newsnight* cites the government's focus on trying to remove *failed asylum seekers* as one of the reasons why the Home Office has such big problems in other areas. Thus *failed asylum seekers* with all the associated connotations remain central to the coverage.

## **Interview material**

The research team raised the concept of *asylum as a symptom of a Home Office in Chaos* during the interviews with journalists, asking some general and some very specific questions (see 'Interviews with Journalists' section for more information on and an overall analysis of the interviews; see Appendix IV for a list of the questions).

In terms of news value, journalists suggested they use the same criteria for *asylum* and *refugee* stories as they do for other stories. Some of the criteria include: what's new? Does our programme have an exclusive story or at least an exclusive angle? Does our audience care? Can we make it interesting? Another major influence is a journalist's area of expertise. A political correspondent based in Westminster, for example, will look for a political dimension, e.g., who won a debate about something in the House of Commons. The criterion of timeliness though regularly mentioned generated some disagreement. One journalist in particular stressed the belief that a time "peg" to hang a story on could be found or generated on any given day. Others cited timeliness as one of the reasons why *asylum* is covered less frequently. They described *asylum* as an ongoing process. This means there is normally little reason why it should be on the programme on any particular day. A cyclical understanding of news was another time related aspect suggested by journalists. According to journalists a theme is sometimes "buzzing" for a while and for reasons that are not always clear. Once it is, it can get on the news programme more easily, even dominate coverage, while other topics suddenly struggle to get on. But the buzz usually subsides. Generally journalists agreed that *asylum* and *refugee* issues had not been on top of the cycle during the monitoring period. *Immigration*, however, the wider framework that *asylum* forms part of had been "buzzing" or had "hit critical mass" according to some journalists.

At the time *immigration* was within the remit of the Home Office. In fact, many of the stories during the monitoring period related to the perception that the Home Office was unable to deal with *immigration*. Based on these findings the research team explained to the journalists its analysis of *asylum* as a symptom of a *Home Office in chaos*. Overall the interviewees accepted that this narrative exists and that certain events are viewed through this prism. Some journalists acknowledged that this may have led to *immigration* and *asylum* being covered on a more abstract level in the context of the political debate. Most journalists developed similar arguments as to why *immigration* and *asylum* appear to be such good examples for the situation at the Home Office, even if employed as a shorthand for the narrative: in these areas the Home Office is not able to maintain its own standards; it does not follow its own processes; it does not have processes in place to achieve its stated aims; also, the Home Office regularly gets its facts wrong; and to some journalists the Home Office appears not to be ready for the challenges of mass migration in a globalised world. Most journalists emphasised that this was not a value judgement on their part as to whether *asylum* or *immigration* are good or bad phenomena. They simply wanted to stress that these areas are not managed properly, hence represented a perfect example of the failures of a failing, chaotic department.

### **Conclusion: ‘Asylum’ – Abstract and Symptomatic of Systemic Failure**

*Home Office in chaos* is a strong if rather disjointed narrative prevalent in news coverage during the monitoring period. Both the analysis of news coverage and the analysis of the interviews with journalists have confirmed this. *Asylum* and *refugee* issues were frequently given as examples of, sometimes even reasons for this situation. Connecting *asylum* to this narrative happened in visual as well as verbal ways. It may not have happened in every item, but it did happen on a rather regular basis, thus creating regular collocations between *asylum*, *terrorism*, *crime*, and *crisis*. That this collocation is already very strong was emphasised by the fact that the reference to *asylum* is often not fully explained. Rather, there seemed to be an implied logic that provided the necessary context without the need for specifying it. This logic was used by journalists as well as their sources: both brought *asylum* into the coverage without being prompted. These mentions can be relatively small;

they can also be substantial. But even when they were substantial *asylum* was usually only referred to, not focused on. The reliance on archival footage of deportations and shots of Home Office buildings made *asylum* and asylum seekers appear as abstract, faceless – anonymous entities best represented by numbers. In this context *asylum* was regularly defined as a problem, a problem that has led to more problems in other areas, such as the fight against *crime*, *terrorism* and *illegal immigration*. In the coverage *asylum* and *refugee* issues was a numbers game, a problem, a reference point that needed no further explanation. It remained a symptom of a *system in crisis*. So despite the fact that *asylum* was not the main topic, although out of focus, it remained indeed in full view.

## **Case Study II: ‘Human Rights’ as a ‘Threat to Public Safety’ – the ‘Afghan Hijackers’ Case**

The coverage during our monitoring period saw the culmination of a long running legal battle between nine Afghan men and the Home Office. The men had hijacked a plane from Kabul bound for Mazar-e-Sharif in February 2000. The flight was diverted and eventually landed at London Stansted, where the hijackers along with a number of other passengers claimed *asylum* in the UK. The criminal convictions in respect to the hijacking were overturned in 2003 on the basis that as the men were fleeing from the Taliban regime and the hijacking had taken place under duress. Despite this ruling the Home Office continued to attempt to deport the nine Afghan men. Justice Sullivan’s and the Appeal Court’s rulings in summer 2006 that indefinite leave to remain should be granted were the latest stage in this legal battle against deportation.

### **Coverage of the ‘Afghan Hijackers’: A Changing Focus**

The developments around the case of the so-called *Afghan hijackers* was one of few long running news stories of summer 2006 that directly involved asylum seekers. Within the main sample of news programmes, it was mentioned in 22 different news items. The coverage of the story was quite evenly spread across the channels, with 5 *BBC News* items, 6 items from *Channel 4 News*, 4 from *ITV News*, and 7 *Sky News* items – although the latter included 2 items which were running news banners. Only once did the story run as the lead in our coverage: on the 10 May edition of *Sky News*. This day was also the first day it appeared in our monitoring period. Otherwise news items involving the *Afghan hijackers* were always placed elsewhere in the running order.

The manner in which the story was covered on each channel was broadly similar: each reporting on the case with Justice Sullivan’s initial High Court judgement on 10 May, the subsequent row about *human rights* in ‘balance’ with *public safety concerns*, and the relations between the government and judiciary. During May, *Sky News* focused more than other channels on the government’s own proposals to reform *human rights legislation* – something which was also a focus for *ITV News* on 23 June. However, it was on *BBC News* and *Channel 4 News* that the *human rights debate*



reappeared on 25 and 26 June respectively, with extensive coverage of David Cameron's proposals for a home grown 'Bill of Rights'. On 28 June, all channels also linked the *Afghan hijackers'* case with another judgement issued by Justice Sullivan on the illegality of control orders. All channels except *Channel 4 News* also reported on the final Court of Appeal judgement on 4 August that the men were entitled to indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

This case study focuses its analysis of the coverage in the main sample on three main phases: 10 and 11 May (Justice Sullivan's High Court ruling), 26 to 28 June (the *human rights debate* and the control orders judgment), and 4 August (the final Court of Appeal ruling). As in the case study I, this section also looks at some contextual material from other media sources.

### **An 'Abuse of Power' or an 'Abuse of Common Sense'?**

On 10 May 2006 Justice Sullivan ruled in the High Court that the nine Afghan men should be allowed to stay in the UK. This was reported by each of the 4 television news programmes. Each highlighted Justice Sullivan's criticism of the government for their protracted efforts to deport the men, and his comment that the case demonstrated "an abuse of power by a public authority at the highest level". As their primary focus, news items across all channels also featured the government's hostile reaction to this ruling, in particular Tony Blair's rebuttal of the judge's comments: Blair countered that the ruling constituted "an abuse of common sense".

Each of the channels endeavoured to contextualise their reporting with a brief synopsis of the case since 2000. They did so in slightly different ways. Only *BBC News* and *Channel 4 News*, for example, included library footage of Jack Straw, then the Home Secretary, pledging that the men would be deported. All of the channels included library footage of the 'hijack scene' at Stansted airport. *ITV News* presented the item fairly briefly as an anchor report. The report included the judge's comments but not Tony Blair's rebuttal. By contrast, *Sky News* ran the item as their top story, branding it "a new deportation row between the government and the courts". With reference to the *foreign prisoners' row*, the package centres upon the notion that "deportation has been a huge issue for the government", and concludes with an estimate of 10 million pounds

as the “cost to the taxpayer” of the affair. Concluding the piece, correspondent Jenny Percival explains: “But the courts say that’s the price of upholding *human rights*.” (our emphasis) Here *human rights* have a price tag: meaningful quantifiable terms and metaphorically reconceived as a commodity. The package is followed by a two-way interview between presenter Gillian Joseph and correspondent Adam Boulton. The presenter opens with the words: “Adam, another deportation row, but one that the public are likely to back the Prime Minister on.” While it is clearly acknowledged in this piece that there are different political positions in the debate about *the separation of power and human rights*, the position of ‘the public’ in relation to these seem to be represented as rather settled.

In the coverage of *BBC News* and *Channel 4 News* the rhetorical tensions between Tony Blair and Justice Sullivan were also an important focus. The items, however, were complex pieces which set the contemporary debate in a different, historical context of criminal and immigration law. In the BBC item, additional sources included a solicitor representing the Afghan men and Sir Andrew Green, chairman of MigrationWatch UK. In his package correspondent Daniel Sandford draws on a range of different perspectives with views on the legal and wider social implications of the case. The package ends, however, with Sandford giving a political ‘insight’: “Those close to the new Home Secretary say it is important that judges retain the confidence of the British public and rulings like this put that at risk.” This transition from a mode of apparently ‘balanced’ direct sourcing of views to this ‘final word’ from an unspecified source, serves to redirect the item’s focus for the forthcoming anchor-correspondent two-way. Here the legal debate becomes a ‘political problem’ requiring a ‘solution’ with anchor Huw Edwards reintroducing the correspondent with the question: “The Prime Minister is clearly exasperated, but is there nothing at all he can do about it?” In its outlining of ‘the problem’ as one of a ‘balance’ between the *human rights* of the Afghan men and those of the public, this piece is fairly typical of the conceptualisation of *human rights* that is demonstrated in many other news items in our main sample: the *human rights* of one individual or group is considered, necessarily, to compromise those of others. This is a particularly problematic example, as it suggests that the *human rights* of the nine Afghan men should be seen only

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in terms of being posited and measured against 'the rights of the public not to be hijacked'.

Taking a different approach to contextualising the tensions between the Home Office and the judiciary, *Channel 4 News* highlighted how the government's policies had meant that the Afghan men had been "left in limbo, unable to work and reliant on state handouts". This is then compared to a series of other *asylum* and *immigration* related cases condemned by the courts. The journalist says that:

"In the past eight months, legal rebukes over sending asylum seekers back to Zimbabwe, over restricting immigrants' right to marry, except in the Church of England, and detaining asylum seekers before their applications have been fully heard."

Here the emphasis is on the government's power and agency, which it exercises through a wider set of policies, but which have been legally judged to be antagonistic to the rights of asylum seekers. Drawing equivalences such as these with the *Afghan hijackers'* case sets the coverage within a very different discursive framework: 'the problem' is situated as resulting from the government's 'tough' approach to asylum seekers and immigrants. The idea of the *dilemma of human rights* as an abstract *problem* that the public ought to be *protected from* is replaced by a far more tangible understanding of *human rights: human rights under threat* from the implementation of the government's immigration and asylum policies.

However, during the monitoring period the understanding of *human rights as the problem* became more prominent, as it continued to resurface in relation to other events. In the coverage, the *Afghan hijackers'* case featured frequently as a reference point. The case became part of the discussion about the *human rights problems* facing the government and the question of potential reform for human rights laws. In such news items, the background and case history of the nine Afghan men, as well as the reasons for their struggle, as asylum seekers, to remain in Britain, were often passed over quickly or obscured.

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## **‘Human Rights’ versus ‘Public Safety’?**

The references to the *Afghan hijackers* to support arguments in a wider debate about *human rights* highlight important aspects of the ways in which the meaning of the case was constructed in the coverage. Though there were subtle differences across the channels and between different reports within the same channel, there was a tendency for the term *Afghan hijackers* to be invoked as a self-evident example of how current human rights law practice could present a *threat to public safety*. In a *Channel 4 News* interview on 10 May, for example, Home Office Minister Tony McNulty asserted: “People should not been seen to be rewarded for something so venal as hijacking.” The threat of violence in that context was sometimes clearly implied in the way the events were recounted. Take, for instance, Cathy Newman’s 12 May report, also on *Channel 4 News*:

“The men, who used guns, knives and grenades to force the plane to fly from Kabul, will be allowed to stay in the country until they can be sent back to Afghanistan without their *human rights* being breached.” (our emphasis)

The threatening behaviour of the hijacking was also recalled by the Afghan men’s own statement, released on 13 May. However, these examples represent rare instances of the ‘act of hijack’ itself being highlighted as a *threat to public safety*. Indeed, it was never directly suggested in any of the coverage that any of the nine men would be likely to act violently towards the public, or that they would be likely to hijack another plane in Britain.

Despite this, the case was represented as one of a series of events through which the issue of *human rights* as a potential *threat to public safety* could be illustrated and highlighted as a subject for political debate. In particular, a close association was forged between the reporting of this case and another story – that of convicted sex attacker Anthony Rice. When Rice was released on probation, he committed murder, enabled by a regime of supervision that had been relaxed in response to a concern for his *human rights*. The Rice story was initially reported as a separate news item by most channels on 10 May. However, as the coverage of *human rights* issues continued to develop during May and June, the two stories were often linked within the same package (e.g., *Channel 4 News* 12 May 2006).

A linkage between the two cases was often represented through the juxtaposition of images in a 'split screen' montage. On *Channel 4 News* on 13 May, for example, an extreme close-up mug shot of Rice is first revealed in the top half of the screen, followed by an image of an aircraft – the hijacked plane – taxiing on a runway in the bottom half. The implication that these separate examples share a common ground is thereby rendered visually clear. The definition of that relation of equivalence is heavily dependent upon the nature of the accompanying narrative.

The link between these stories was also reinforced as a result of the same government minister being responsible for or at least able to speak on *asylum* and *immigration* as well as *criminal justice* issues. This situation allowed journalists to take the opportunity to ask questions about both areas within the same interview. For example on 10 May, after questioning Tony McNulty about the *Afghan Hijackers'* case, *Channel 4 News* presenter Jon Snow asked the Minister about Anthony Rice.

### **Mug Shots and Hijacked Planes: Narrative Images of the 'Afghan Hijackers'**

Despite some common images, the story was illustrated slightly differently by each news programme. For example, images of the hijacked aeroplane, either stationary or taxiing, were commonly used when recounting the events that occurred at Stansted in February 2000. Interestingly, such images were also used in news items with a main focus on the legal rulings in May and August of 2006 or the wider *human rights* debate. At times these images were clearly identified as footage of the hijacking scene, showing individuals being led from the aircraft surrounded by police and emergency services personnel in fluorescent jackets. Often, the images selected were night scenes, cast in the dramatic green hue of infrared film. The use of these images appeared to serve as a kind of short-hand to recapture the sense of heightened tension which had surrounded those events (*BBC News* 10 May, 25 May 2006; *Channel 4 News* 10 May, 12 May 2006).

In the coverage of and subsequent references to the May 10 High Court ruling, several other significant images were repeatedly used. These included footage of the nine Afghan men walking to court, either hiding their faces with newspapers (*Sky News* 10 May 2006) or with their faces blurred through pixilation (*BBC News* 10 May

2006). Footage of the men getting out of cars was also used to accompany points about whether they would be allowed to stay in Britain (*Channel 4 News* 10 May 2006).

Occasionally mug-shot-style images of the nine men featured in the coverage. For example, in the *Channel 4 News* coverage of 12 May 2006, two images of the Safi brothers, identified as “the masterminds behind the Afghan hijack plot” are shown before receding into a full screen of images of all nine men. This full screen then makes another appearance on 13 May, accompanying the Afghan men’s statement to the press. A rolling strip of mug-shot-style photographs is also used on *Sky News* to illustrate this story (13 May 2006). The strip is used again the following day in an item about proposed reforms of human rights law in response to the “backlash over *Afghan hijackers*” (*Sky News* 14 May 2006; our emphasis)

### **‘And now, the ‘Afghan Hijackers’ have joined the debate...’**

The dominant voices in news items relating to this case were largely those of politicians and legal professionals. These sources offered their perspectives and analysis in terms of its wider legal and political significance. However, one notable exception to the use of these ‘usual sources’ was the reporting of the nine Afghan men’s press release on *Channel 4 News* and *Sky News* on 13 May. In a brief news item, *Sky News* paraphrased the statement while running the above-mentioned strip of mug-shot-style images. *Channel 4 News* contextualised the statement far more extensively. It was introduced within an extended package on the Human Rights Act, discussing the government’s pledge to reform the act in the event of losing their appeal of the judgement. The Afghan men’s statement is reproduced almost verbatim in the package:

“We do realise that, for the other people on that plane, the hijack was terrifying and we regret causing such fear in the hearts of others. But we did it because we were desperate, and we did not believe we could all get away safely in any other way...[they added]...We face being accused of sponging and living off the state when it’s the last thing we wish or need to do.”

However, this complex and extended news item again uses the *Afghan hijackers'* case as one key example, alongside that of Anthony Rice, through which to assess the political debate about *human rights*. Still, this represents an unusual articulation of the voices of asylum seekers within the political discussion that actually concerns them – a point that is underlined by the manner in which it is recontextualised within the framework of the ongoing human-rights news focus: "And now, the *Afghan hijackers* have joined the debate about *human rights legislation*." (*Channel 4 News* 13 May 2006; our emphasis)

### **‘Human Rights Reform’: Reporting the Political Consensus**

As a political debate about *human rights* developed, the *Afghan hijackers'* case was often drawn upon as a meaningful example through which to construct and support political arguments about *human rights reform*. This elevated the reference to the case to an even more abstract level. Whether they were the government's or the opposition's, the arguments in the debate were rather similar. As a result broadcasters were rather restricted in the manner in which this 'debate' could be reported. At the end of June, for example, *BBC News* and *Channel 4 News* each devoted extensive items to David Cameron's proposals for a new British 'Bill of Rights' to replace the Human Rights Act. (*BBC News* 25 June 2006; *Channel 4 News* 26 June 2006)

An interview on *Channel 4 News* illustrates these very narrowly drawn battle lines very clearly. In the programme a package on the topic was followed by an extended interview or round-table talk between presenter Jon Snow, Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General, and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Falconer. With both major political parties agreeing that recent 'interpretations' of the Human Rights Act were problematic, the discussion presented two very similarly positioned political perspectives. The participants merely endeavoured to differentiate their policy approaches on the basis of the viability of their proposals rather than the values underpinning and informing them. In this context, the *Afghan hijackers'* case was discussed in terms of exemplifying one of the "difficulties" of the European Convention (Lord Falconer), with legal decisions on the case constituting a "a nonsense" (Dominic Grieve). In order to avoid a complex and dry legalistic debate, it is perhaps unsurprising that

the example of the *Afghan hijackers* is taken up by Jon Snow: "OK, well then let's just look at the *Afghan hijackers*...how do you resolve it? I mean, you accept that it, er... it had some problems." (our emphasis) This question did not challenge the assumptions underpinning the arguments of both politicians: it allowed for the case to be referred to as a kind of self-evident 'short hand' for these complex issues. It also reaffirmed the question, i.e., what to do about judges 'interpreting' human rights laws 'wrongly', as the legitimate and central question to ask in relation to this issue. As such the argumentative focus turned into a debate about which side had the most realistic management strategy for this reified 'problem'. The presuppositions informing this debate remained unchallenged, even when they momentarily surfaced. For example, at one point Lord Falconer asserts:

"Article 3 of the Convention says you can't deport somebody if they'll be suffering torture or degrading treatment. That's the law – we intend to argue in the European Court that it's wrong, but if we fail in that argument, then that will remain the law – irrespective of any Bill of Rights introduced into the United Kingdom..."

The implication within this contribution, that facing "suffering torture or degrading treatment" ought not to be an impediment to deportation remained unchallenged, and in fact this line of discussion was soon closed down – apparently for straying too far into the realms of highfaluting legalese.

Across the programmes, the terms of the political debate largely determined the terms and framework through which the broadcasters continued to discuss the *Afghan hijackers*' case through May and June. References to *Afghan hijackers* in the coverage were often very abstract, not so much about the asylum claims of the men or the particular facts of the case, but rather serving as an apparently meaningful example of *human rights* posing a *problem* for the government. Indeed, the representation of the *Afghan hijackers*' case as a *threat to public safety* appeared as an idea of 'common sense' within this dominant political discourse on *human rights* and *rebalancing the scales of justice*.

However, it should also be noted that a concerted attempt was made, at times, to break out of and challenge this dominant 'common sense' discourse. *Channel 4 News* on 13 May, for

*References to 'Afghan hijackers' in the coverage were often very abstract, not so much about the asylum claims of the men or the particular facts of the case, but rather serving as an apparently meaningful example of 'human rights' posing a problem for the government.*



example, included an interview with Liberal Democrat peer Lord Lester. The peer challenged the idea that there was a *problem* with the Human Rights Act, resituating the debate as a political strategy serving the interests of the tabloid press and of politicians in difficulty.

## **Control Orders and the ‘Threat of Terrorism’**

The case of the *Afghan hijackers* also featured as a reference point in the coverage of another High Court ruling. On 28 June control orders, an anti-*terrorism* measure introduced in place of detention without trial in March 2005, were judged to breach the Human Rights Act. Each of the channels referred to the *Afghan hijackers’* case in their reporting of the ruling. For example:

“Mr Sullivan recently crossed swords with the government over his decision to allow the *Afghan hijackers* to stay – a ruling the government is appealing against and which the Prime Minister described as “an abuse of common sense”. ” (*Channel 4 News* 28 June 2006; our emphasis)

“The ruling was by Mr Justice Sullivan, who quashed another control order in April, and last month allowed nine *Afghan hijackers* to stay in Britain – condemned by Tony Blair as “an abuse of common sense”. ” (*Sky News* 28 June 2006; our emphasis)

“The same judge also allowed the *Afghan hijackers* to stay earlier this year – no wonder frustrated Home Office Ministers plan to appeal, arguing that the Control Orders are not so severe they breach the European Convention on Human Rights.” (*ITV News* 28 June 2006; our emphasis)

As becomes evident from these examples, the connection seemed to have been based on two aspects: a) the case also involved *human rights*; and b) the same judge, Mr Justice Sullivan, issued the ruling in both cases. The emphasis is slightly different across each of these channels, (note particularly the “no wonder” comment on *ITV News*), but a common conceptual link is drawn between the two otherwise unrelated stories. The link points to the ‘balance of power’ struggle between the judiciary and the executive. Any particularities of the Afghan case, beyond the Prime Minister’s own rhetorical intervention, are submerged by the more immediate

discussions about *human rights* conflicting with counterterrorism measures. Indeed, the *Sky News* item further contextualises this tension by illustrating the report with stock footage of the scenes outside Aldgate tube station after the bombings of 7 July 2005, thereby emphasising the ruling's proximity to the anniversary of these events.

Clearly the central focus of these stories is on the issue of *terrorism* and *counterterrorism* measures. However, the inclusion of the *Afghan hijackers'* case as a relevant example in this respect is not necessarily self-explanatory and raises several questions: should audiences have considered the nine Afghan men's presence in the community as posing a potential *threat to public safety*? Did broadcasters intend for an equivalence to be drawn between the nine Afghan men and those who had been held under control orders? These questions cannot be answered with certainty. What is clear, however, is that the level of abstraction at which the *Afghan hijackers'* case is invoked here, seems to allow for a potential slippage of meaning between quite different stories. It is arguably also responsible for some inaccuracies in reporting the details of the *Afghan hijackers'* case. For example, on 28 June, a *BBC News* item concerning Justice Sullivan's ruling on the unlawfulness of control orders was compared to a number of other human-rights-related judgements. These included cases of detention without trial and deportation to countries which might use torture. This particular item incorrectly refers to Justice Sullivan as a man "who recently ordered a group of *Afghan hijackers* be freed" (our emphasis). In fact, the ruling was about the right of the nine men to stay in the UK; it had nothing to do with incarceration or administering *criminal justice*. This mistaken representation of the judgement can be seen as an example and symptom of the degree to which *criminal justice* and *human rights* issues were being linked as 'common sense' in the news media at this time.

## **Language in Reporting the Appeal Court Judgement**

On 4 August, *Sky News*, *BBC News* and *ITV News* each covered the appeal judgement regarding the *Afghan hijackers* rather briefly as anchor reports. Similar to the early coverage of the case, these items included a condensed synopsis of the events from the hijacking to John Reid's pledge to change the law. Lasting 40

seconds, the longest piece ran on *ITV News*. There the ruling was presented less as a victory for the asylum seeking Afghan men than as a loss for John Reid. Reid's defiant response to the ruling is paraphrased by the presenter using language which simultaneously represents the Home Secretary's position and distances it from the position of the journalist: "But Dr Reid says he'll bring in new laws to limit the rights of what he called, "undesirable asylum seekers"." For *Sky News*, the legal struggle is represented very much from the perspective of the Home Secretary: "The Home Secretary says he'll change the law after losing his court of appeal battle against nine *Afghan hijackers*." (our emphasis) Despite their slight differences, these pieces are illustrative of a prevailing tendency in much of the news coverage to identify, either sympathetically or otherwise, with the political position and legal struggles of the government rather than that those of the nine Afghan men.

## **A Tabloid Influenced Agenda?**

Several of the broadcasters made explicit reference to the tabloid coverage of the case. On 12 May 2006, *Channel 4 News* reported that *The Sun* had launched a Conservative Party backed campaign to scrap the Human Rights Act, with reference to the cases of the *Afghan hijackers* and of Anthony Rice having "hit the headlines". However, in referring to the tabloid coverage, broadcasters were also commenting upon the possibility that the political agenda on this issue was being 'tabloid led'.

*ITV News* on 23 May, for example, uses the *Afghan hijackers* as an example in its reporting of Tony Blair's speech on 'rebalancing' the criminal justice system. The item features images of three tabloid front pages from recent weeks as if to suggest it was the influence of these that have made *criminal justice* an issue to which Blair is now responding. The first of these front pages comes from *The Sun* and features the headline 'Scandal of Afghan terrorists'. One of the other tabloid images is a front page of the Anthony Rice case. However, it is the *Afghan hijackers'* image which is selected as the studio backdrop for an interview with Phil Hall, former editor of the *News of the World*.

This item is complex in terms of its representation of the *Afghan Hijackers'* case. It is not directly 'about' the *Afghan hijackers*. It is about Tony Blair's criminal justice policy announcement. But, in

using these tabloid front pages as examples, as intertextual reference points, the item also seems to question whether the government is responding to a tabloid driven agenda in its policy making. The item does not seek to problematise the priorities of that 'tabloid agenda', but rather to highlight the tabloid attention to these issues as an important context for Blair's speech. The nature of *The Sun's* coverage, associating the Afghan case with the threat of *crime* and *terrorism*, remains unquestioned.

## Linking Issues – One Strange Example

On 14 May, *Sky News* ran a story by correspondent Peter Spencer which discussed the possible overhaul of human rights laws. The item makes a very strange connection between the *Afghan hijackers* and a story about tough new measures to deal with anti-vivisectionists, who had desecrated a grave as part of their campaign against animal testing. The transition of the news item from the anti-vivisectionist focus to the *Afghan hijackers* apparently revolved around the word 'rights':

"So much for animal rights, after nine Afghan refugees, who hijacked a plane to Britain, couldn't be deported on *human rights* grounds the government wants to give greater emphasis to *public safety*." (our emphasis)

Whether it is regarding animals or Afghan refugees, this piece seems to suggest that the issue of *rights compromising public safety* is currently a real problem for the government. The connection of these very different and disparate events seemed striking in its eccentricity to the research team. The lack of an apparent logical justification to attach these stories to one another stands out in this case. However, despite this surprising and rather unusual link, this example is useful in drawing attention to the use of metaphor in the construction of meaning in the broadcast coverage of this story, albeit usually far more subtly and less dramatically than in this example.

In this and other instances the *Afghan hijackers'* case is metaphorically linked to a range of other newsworthy stories, such as the Anthony Rice case and the debate over control orders. In each, it is a more abstract principle of equivalence that is brought to the fore, i.e., the *problem of human rights*, a *threat to public safety*. The particular details of the hijackers' case are replaced with the

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focus on the more abstract issue or idea. This can have substantial consequences. Drained of its particularity, the story of the nine Afghan men, re-emerging in 2006 because of the culmination of an asylum case, actually comes to symbolise a series of threatening ideas associated with *crime*, *terrorism* and a *risk to public safety* through upholding human rights law.

## Contextual Material

The BBC 2 programme *Newsnight* did not extensively report on the *Afghan hijackers* case during our monitoring period. While Justice Sullivan's ruling and Tony Blair's "abuse of common sense" comments were covered on 10 May, this report was quite brief. The most extensive piece featured on 11 May. It included a discussion about whether Britain should 'scrap the Human Rights Act'. Interestingly, this piece explicitly asked how the meaning of *human rights* had seemingly changed. It contrasted a set of historic examples and events that have come to define *human rights*, such as the Tiananmen Square student protests, the Suffragettes, anti-segregation campaigns in the US and anti-apartheid in South Africa, with the invocations of *human rights* in the *Afghan hijackers* and Anthony Rice cases. In the introduction presenter Gavin Estler asks:

"If you thought *human rights* meant this – standing up to tyranny, how did it come to mean allowing *Afghan hijackers* the right to stay in this country?" (our emphasis)

The item is presented as part of a broader focus on *security*, which is identified as "the most important duty of any government". The series of news items also included a report into the London bombings of 7 July 2005. Peter Marshall's wide-ranging package considers the Afghan case as one of two "controversial court cases" in which concerns have been raised "that some are using today's human rights laws as a cloak for murder and hijack". The package also includes an analysis of the expansion of human rights laws by the European Court at Strasbourg. Marshall uses human rights protection for refugees against deportation to unsafe countries as an example highlighted by "conservative lawyers" as to how human rights law was "expanded disastrously in the 1990s". The package is followed by an interview with Philippe Sands QC and Daniel Hannan, Conservative MEP. The participants discuss the ruling primarily in terms of the separation of powers and the relative

powers of unelected judges and politicians. The potential that this issue conveniently serves as a vehicle for a wider anti-European political strategy is also raised.

While in this item *human rights reform* was discussed and reference was made to a possible British 'Bill of Rights', *Newsnight* did not cover Cameron's proposals on this at the end of June unlike the other television news programmes. *Newsnight*, however, used Tony Blair's speech calling for a rebalancing of *criminal justice* in favour of the "law abiding majority" as the lead item on 23 June. But this is contextualised with a package about anti-social behaviour, Blair's 'Respect' campaign launched in January 2006, and the crime experienced by residents of a Swindon estate. *Newsnight* also reported Justice Sullivan's ruling on control orders on 28 June, but unlike the other channels, no link is made with the earlier *Afghan hijackers* ruling. Finally, the Court of Appeal judgement on 4 August was not reported in *Newsnight*'s coverage.

On Radio 4 the story of the *Afghan hijackers* first appeared on 10 May on the *World at One* programme. The programme reports:

"Nine Afghan asylum seekers, who hijacked a plane to Britain, have won a legal battle against the government's refusal to grant them leave to stay here as refugees."

The case's history is briefly recounted. As is Justice Sullivan's comment that the government's behaviour in pursuing the case amounted to a "conspicuous unfairness amounting to an abuse of power".

The next day, the *Today Programme* picked up the story, reporting that the Government was considering an appeal against the judgement. The report mentions "that nine Afghan asylum seekers, who hijacked a plane and forced the crew to fly to Britain, can stay in the country as refugees" together with Tony Blair's "abuse of common sense" comments. This more negative response from politicians to the judgement was also reflected in Harriet Cass's review of the press. She identifies *human rights* as a strong theme featuring in *The Telegraph*, *The Mirror*'s coverage of the Anthony Rice case, and in *The Sun*'s reporting of the *Afghan hijackers* ruling. Having quoted from *The Mirror* on the Rice case, Cass explains:

"*The Sun* is just as outraged over the nine armed Afghans who hijacked a plane and forced it to land in Britain, who've won their case against deportation. "Ludicrous human rights laws", the paper says, "put their interests above those of the British public"." (*Today Programme* 11 May 2006)

On 27 June David Cameron's 'Bill of Rights' proposals was covered in an extended item on the *Today Programme*. The issue of *human rights* was also discussed by Oliver McTernan, Director of the Organisation for Forward Thinking, in his *Thought for the Day* segment. But neither item makes a connection to the *Afghan hijackers'* case. Nor was the case discussed in connection with the control order ruling in either Radio 4 programme.

### **Conclusion: Asylum Seekers and Refugees– A 'Threat to Public Safety'?**

Overall, broadcasters endeavoured to explain the rulings and the history of the case in a fairly balanced way. They included a range of perspectives in the arguments of legal professionals and politicians, and in the case of *Channel 4 News* and *Sky News* the statement of the nine Afghan men themselves. But the coverage of the story was also sustained and made sense of in the context of wider political narratives – especially in the debate about *human rights* and *public safety*. The issue of legally enforceable *human rights* became highly politicised at this time. A range of cases became newsworthy as examples of how *human rights* posed a *problem* for the government. The *Afghan hijackers'* case therefore became closely linked with otherwise entirely unrelated stories, which happened to involve very threatening themes of *criminality* and *terrorism*, e.g., Anthony Rice, terror suspects on control orders. The link is a contingent one, but the regular juxtaposition of these stories connects them metaphorically and opens the possibility by association that the *Afghan hijackers* might be identified as an equally serious *threat to public safety*.

This framing of the story resulted in it becoming somewhat de-contextualised from its historical narrative as well as distanced from the more sympathetic connotations which might have been attached to asylum seekers fleeing the Taliban regime. In this phase of reporting, references to the case became rather more abstract, and entangled in political debates, where the central issue was not

the case itself, but rather, for example, the balance of power between the judiciary and the Executive. We would not argue that there was necessarily an intentional 'demonisation' of the *Afghan hijackers* in the broadcast news media. However, a story that could have been represented as a 'triumph for justice' or as an example of the humanitarian protection of asylum seekers, was instead presented as *another political problem facing the government* and as *evidence* in the political debate about the need to reform human rights laws.



### **Case Study III: Same Words and Shifting Meaning – ‘Refugees’ in National and International Contexts**

The first two case studies have highlighted the dominant themes in the news coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues. The third and final case study explores several other important areas pertaining to the narrative themes, framework of references and the discursive net within which *asylum* and *refugee* related news are positioned. In this section we also pay particular attention to aspects of language through which these areas were expressed. Drawing upon examples from our wider corpus of television material compiled from the *BBC 1 News*, *Channel 4 News*, *ITV News* and *Sky News*, this section highlights some significant differences between *asylum* and *refugee* related news coverage in a UK context and aspects of international news items involving *refugee* issues. Our analysis focuses upon the following points:

- when and how the immigration status of an individual or group is mentioned in reports involving *asylum* and *refugee* issues;
- the significance of different terminology in descriptions of ‘seeking refuge’ in diverse geographical and political contexts;
- the construction of an opposition between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ asylum seekers and refugees;
- some key contradictions in the dominant discourse through which *asylum* and *refugee* issues are ‘usually’ talked about

By comparing these examples and the very different discursive contexts within which they are constructed, we intend to demonstrate the inherent contingency of dominant discourses surrounding *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the UK context. In underlining the tensions and contradictions within the language of *asylum* and *refugee* reporting, we hope to render visible the forces governing *what* is ‘sayable’ within *asylum* and *refugee* related stories in Britain and which underpin regular patterns informing the reporting of these issues in the broadcast news.

## The Question of 'Relevance' and the Immigration Status of Abdullah Baybasin

Throughout the monitoring period we observed several instances where journalists treated the immigration status of a person involved in a news story differently on the different programmes. While one programme would mention that somebody had claimed *asylum*, was a *failed asylum seeker* or in fact a refugee, another wouldn't. But when do journalists mention a person's immigration status? What are the rules? When we asked these questions in our interviews most of the journalists answered something along the lines of 'When the immigration status is relevant'. Pressed for a more specific response, several gave examples that involved *crime*, some mentioned *terrorism* (see 'Interviews with Journalist' section for more details). The data suggests, however, that even within these wide topic areas the definition of 'relevance' is not consistent. A good example to develop in more detail is the coverage of the sentencing of the Turkish-Kurdish drug dealer Abdullah Baybasin on 15 May 2006.

Abdullah Baybasin was purported to be responsible for a huge portion of the heroin trade to the UK. He arrived in the UK in the late 1990s, applied for *asylum* and was eventually granted leave to remain. On 15 May 2006 he was sentenced to 22 years in jail for various criminal offences in connection with the drugs trade and blackmailing the local community in north London. On that day *Channel 4 News*, *BBC News* and *ITV News* all covered the case, but they treated the immigration background of Baybasin in markedly different ways. *Channel 4 News* focused on the *immigration* dimension; *ITV News* mentioned it; and *BBC News* did not refer to it at all.

### Relatively Relevant – Same Story, Different Decisions

On *Channel 4 News* Baybasin was the top story of the day. In the teaser before the title sequence, anchor Jon Snow frames the coverage. Over surveillance footage and a mug shot of Baybasin his commentary runs: "Britain's biggest drug dealer jailed for 22 years. Bugged and filmed by police. But why was he granted *asylum* to stay in this country?" (our emphasis) The commentary after the title sequence confirms the focus. Again Jon Snow:

“Confined to a wheelchair after a shoot-out with a rival, Abdullah Baybasin was a Turkish Kurd who blackmailed, beat up and shot at people with whom he did business. Strangely, he was granted *asylum* whilst already serving a sentence for earlier gun crimes. The word tonight is that he turned supergrass. Officials won’t confirm or deny it. Baybasin and his brother, now jailed in Holland, ran one of the most feared drug gangs in Europe. Also tonight...” (our emphasis)

The first piece, a package, focuses on Baybasin’s immigration history and relates as well as contrasts it with his criminal career. The next piece, a correspondent report featuring a live interview with Arzu Besmen, Chair of the Kurdish Association, focuses on the impact Baybasin had on the Kurdish community in north London. His immigration status is not mentioned. But it is picked up later in the programme in a headline recap. There he is described as a “Kurdish refugee”. The recap is followed by an interview with Claude Moraes, the Labour MEP for the London area. Again the interview quickly turns to his immigration status. As his second question Jon Snow asks Moraes: “Well, from following it have you managed to divine any sense of quite how Baybasin managed to get *asylum* whilst being in Belmarsh on an earlier gun crime offence.” (our emphasis) Moraes answers that the ‘abuse of the asylum system’ would just be one of many crimes alleged in this case. He then goes on to make allusions to alleged links to the police and intelligence services that may have played a role in the case.

Throughout the programme the coverage returns to questions surrounding Baybasin’s immigration status.

The coverage is quite different on *ITV News*: the sentencing of the drug dealer is mentioned in the headlines at the beginning of the programme, but it is not the top story. An explicit reference to Baybasin’s immigration status is made only once. In the introduction to the main piece, a package, anchor Mark Austin says:

“He was behind 90% of the heroin in Britain, a trade that claims 750 lives and claims thousands of others every year. But tonight Kurdish *refugee* Abdullah Baybasin is paying the price. He is starting 22 years in jail. As Harry Smith reports, Baybasin was the godfather of a family business worth 10 billion pounds.” (our emphasis)

The report itself neither makes an explicit mention of Baybasin immigrating to the UK, nor of his immigration status, but focuses on his crimes in general and his impact on the local community. These are the aspects that *BBC News* focuses on as well. The only difference to the coverage on ITV is that on the BBC programme the word '*refugee*' is not mentioned.

The differences clearly show: the journalists covering this story have interpreted the relevance of Baybasin's immigration status quite differently. *Channel 4 News* decided to focus on it; *ITV News* to mention it; and *BBC News* decided to remain silent about it. What might have been the rationales that led to these different decisions? We can only surmise the reasons. In the case of *Channel 4 News* it might have been as follows: Baybasin's situation represented an interesting case of somebody with a rather special immigration history. Also, in terms of the news values described to the research team in the interviews with journalists, *Channel 4 News* is looking for stories that nobody else has. By focussing on the *immigration* dimension, the programme featured an original if not exclusive take on the story. The relevance of the term '*refugee*' to the coverage on *ITV News* is less clear. No further explanation, no further mention or reference to that aspect featured in the item, suggesting an implied relevance that needs no further explanation. *BBC News* in this case apparently did not see the relevance of Baybasin's immigration status.

## **Conclusion: Is Silence the Answer?**

The *Channel 4 News* coverage emphasised the *crime-refugee* collocation. But by exploring possible reasons, i.e., Baybasin may have been a police informer; it also set a context and gives an explanation for this individual case. *ITV News* made the collocation of *crime* and *refugee* only once. The relevance of this mention without further explanation leaves the connection between *crime* and *refugees* standing. Through its silence, *BBC News* does not mention the connection.

The different reporting approaches in the Baybasin case raise a number of questions about how journalists should treat the immigration status of people who feature in stories with a *crime* dimension. From the material the research team has examined, the basis of relevance and newsworthiness seems rather unclear. We

would suggest that there is awareness among journalists that mentioning immigration status in such reports could contribute to an already stigmatised image of asylum seekers and refugees in general. This might influence decisions not to mention this detail. On the other hand, such a reluctance might well be lessened if the dramatic value of a *crime* story might be further enhanced: for example raising the question that the perpetrator 'should not have been here in the first place', thus articulating a political concern about the competency of the authorities; or if the question of deservedness to the protection of the British nation becomes a central dimension of the story. The evident lack of journalistic consensus on this issue, would suggest that journalists themselves are not necessarily sure about the rationale informing their decision-making in this area.

As illustrated in our concept map the regular collocation of *crime* with *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the news is an important element of a wider discourse. In this discourse asylum seekers and refugees are linked with the idea of *a threat to public safety*. The reporting of the *Afghan hijackers'* case (analysed above in case study II) clearly articulates *crime* as a substantive aspect of the news story. However, we would argue that it is also important to consider how the more incidental mentioning of immigration status in the coverage of *crime* might contribute cumulatively to a 'common sense' association between *asylum* and *refugee* issues and criminality. We would suggest that this issue is centrally important to understanding how *asylum* and *refugee* issues are negatively constructed within broadcast coverage.

Another aspect, the construction of a binary opposition between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' migrant identities is something we describe in further detail below. We have begun here to set out how this is articulated within wider discourses concerned with the political management of different areas of 'the system', including *criminal justice* issues. In the next section we develop our argument about language use in the reporting of *asylum* and *refugee* issues in order to explore the usage of different terminology in different geopolitical contexts.

## A Different Type: Refugees in the Context of International and Humanitarian Crises

The main focus of this report is an analysis of the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in a UK and to a lesser extent in a European Union context. Along the way, however, the research team has also taken note of the usages of the terms *refugee* and *asylum* in other contexts. This section looks at two key areas, *climate change* and *humanitarian crises*, in which this terminology was used and highlights some interesting points of contrast and comparison.

*Climate change* was one of the major stories during the monitoring period (see 'News Context and Collocations' section for more information). Both, *BBC News* with 'Climate Changing Us' and *ITV News* with '3 ° C from Disaster' ran series on the issue. These programmes as well as those on the other channels also featured non-branded segments related to *climate change*. Several pieces focused on the effect *climate change* has on people in China (*ITV News* 2 May 2006), Alaska (*BBC News* 2 June 2006), and Bangladesh (*BBC News* 13 September 2006). The people forced to migrate from their place of residence in each of these contexts are variously called *refugees* (*BBC News* 13 September 2006) (*ITV News* 2 May 2006), *climate change refugees* (*BBC News* 13 September 2006), as well as "environmental refugees" who live in "refugee villages" and "depend on government hand-outs to eke out a precarious living" (*ITV News* 2 May 2006).

But it is not only the usage of certain terminology that is interesting to note here. The portrayal overall suggests a thoroughly positive understanding of refugees in this context: the *environmental refugees* depending on the (Chinese) government's hand-outs are Tibetan goat and yak herders. The correspondent does not question their dependency. Rather, it seems justified by the report's portrayal of the impact *climate change* has on them. Also, refugees often appear as sources, and correspondents take a closer look at the causes for their situation. At times the journalists even highlight the involvement and responsibility of the likely audience, i.e., members of the British public, for creating this situation: in a piece on *BBC News* (13 September) on *climate change refugees* in Bangladesh, for example, correspondent Roger Harrebin stresses the influence of carbon emissions produced in "rich nations" and "homes in

Europe” on *climate change* that lead to ever higher floods in Bangladesh. The piece goes beyond raising the question whether “rich nations” should have a moral obligation to help refugees; in the case of *climate change refugees*, rich nations are portrayed as being to blame for the situation in the first place – a depth of analysis about the causal factors forcing the migration of peoples to seek refuge that the research team did not observe in the reporting related to refugees in Europe or the UK.

## **Depending on Location: Deserving/Undeserving Identities in ‘Crisis’ Narratives**

The emerging discourse around *climate change refugees* shares some interesting commonalities with aspects of the discourses surrounding refugees in other international news items, and in particular the coverage depicting humanitarian crises such as in the Darfur region of Sudan.

Within the broadcast material examined by the research team, the label *refugee* appears to be more readily invoked when referring to forced migration stories occurring in contexts which are geographically distant from the UK. The coverage of the crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan is only one example here, where people displaced by the violence in the region were regularly referred to as *refugees* or as living in *refugee camps* (e.g., *Channel 4 News* 5 August 2006; *Sky News* 5 July 2006).

We would argue that a certain sense of somebody being ‘deserving’ can be implied by the term *refugee* in the context of a *humanitarian crisis* abroad. At the same time, in the British context the term identifies someone not necessarily as ‘deserving’ but rather as having successfully negotiated the asylum process. This ambiguity in meaning between the legal and the humanitarian terminology creates a tension which may function to limit its use in reports on *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the UK. These international contexts, by contrast, appear to escape the legal and political weight which pervades *asylum* and *refugee* news in the UK. They avoid the discursive patterns positioning asylum seekers and refugees as objects of formal asylum systems and application processes. As such, the distinction between individuals who are ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ of *refugee* status, which are regularly implied in the coverage of *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the British context, seem to vanish.

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In the British context it appears to be meaningful, in legal as well as political terms to sustain a distinction between *refugees* and *asylum seekers*. It is perhaps more difficult, however, for journalists to sustain such a distinction beyond the borders of the national polity or jurisdiction of the European Union. In other contexts, where the right to refuge is apparently not governed by a bureaucratic-style system of controls, some of the more powerful 'taken for granted' distinctions between 'undeserving' and 'deserving' migrant identities are destabilised. Within such news items, where the vulnerability of individuals experiencing situations of *crisis* is palpable, and in addition, where the question of 'our' responsibility to intervene to resolve global problems, such as *humanitarian crisis* and *climate change* is introduced, the term *refugee* seem to acquire a more morally unambiguous status. To differentiate between the legitimacy of different migrant groups in such contexts would seem rather inappropriate, and to serve to undermine and circumscribe the main issues at stake in the reporting. It seems to be the case that within these wider international contexts, familiar patterns of the dominant official discourse and journalistic reporting in the domestic context are challenged.

One further important characteristic to note here is that the identities of asylum seekers and refugees within these news reports are represented as *subjected to* and not *subjects of crisis*. In detailing the 'push' factors of migration, such stories rearticulate refugees as human beings who have been obliged to migrate by forces beyond their own control. In order to develop our close textual and conceptual analysis of these issues further, the following section focuses upon the conflict in Lebanon which occurred during our monitoring period in July 2006.

### **British Refugees? – The 'Evacuation' of Foreign Nationals from Lebanon**

In the reporting of the events in Lebanon in July 2006, one of the main points of focus across the channels was the experiences of foreign nationals seeking to leave the region in order to escape the dangers of Lebanon as a scene of conflict. In attending to this aspect of the reporting, we do not intend to suggest that the fate of Lebanese civilians was not recognised or covered by the broadcasters. Rather, we aim to explore this as one particularly newsworthy element of the coverage, and to further elucidate some



of the key dimensions of our arguments about the language and context of reporting *asylum* and *refugee* issues, raised above.

## **Lebanon, Summer 2006: An Overview of the Coverage**

As the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah escalated and with military action imminent, both the BBC and ITV relocated news anchors to the region. They also deployed correspondents in order to follow the journey of British nationals fleeing Lebanon. Both broadcasters reported from Beirut, Tyre in the South of Lebanon, an area bearing the brunt of much of the military action, Cyprus, where British nationals were taken by naval warships as a first port of call, and finally from Gatwick airport, where relieved relatives greeted the newly returned. *ITV News* also stationed a journalist on board a naval warship, HMS Bulwark, in order to document the experiences and conditions of passage on the journey to safety (*ITV News* 20 July 2006). *Channel 4 News* arranged for a special satellite video phone link with the captain of one vessel (*Channel 4 News* 20 July 2006). Each of the channels followed British citizens leaving the region in order to highlight their experiences at the different stages of their journey back to the UK.

### **‘Evacuees’, ‘Returnees’ or ‘Refugees’?**

Across the channels, reporters frequently adopted the label ‘evacuees’ in their descriptions of the foreign nationals seeking to escape the conflict zone (*ITV News* 18 & 20 July 2006; *BBC News* 19 & 20 July 2006; *Channel 4 News* 20 July). In one *BBC News* report from Gatwick, documenting the first arrivals of Britons fleeing the conflict, the label ‘returnees’ was also used by reporter Nick Bryant:

“After the cauldron of the Middle East, the warm embrace of relatives and friends. These returnees flew in from Cyprus this evening – the end of their arduous journey – the end of their anguish and fear.” (20 July 2006)

Indeed, by contrast with the reporting on Darfur and *climate change*, it seemed that journalists were reluctant to use the word ‘refugees’ to identify this group of people and the circumstances of their migration away from the region. In fact, a strong resistance to the idea that there might be ‘British refugees’ was clearly evident in

the coverage. For example, in one *ITV News* report from Cyprus on 18 July, correspondent Tim Rogers explains:

“Well, we’re expecting the people who’ve been evacuated to be taken to the British Sovereign bases where they will be interviewed by Home Office officials with a view to moving them on very quickly. There will also be British Red Cross and SOS International - the emergency relief organisations will be there on stand-by to offer any assistance should any of these evacuees need it. It’s our impression though, at this stage – they won’t – but the idea is to move them on quickly – to get them out of Cyprus, so that they’re not based here. There is no suggestion of a refugee camp, or anything of that sort. The idea is simply to move them on and get them home.”

An important feature of this news item is its negation of the idea that a system or institutional structure of any kind might be necessary to manage the presence of British people as ‘refugees’. The notion of a, “refugee camp, or anything of that sort” is raised in order to immediately dismiss such an idea as unnecessary and over-precautionary. The idea that the presence of British people, who might in more regular circumstances, be welcomed as tourists, could possibly present a *problem*, which might require *refugee management*, is articulated as a rather uncomfortable concept here. A refugee camp for British people is presented as a highly problematic and rather unimaginable idea, which would perhaps threaten to disrupt accepted understandings of a) what it means to be British, and b) what it means to be a refugee.

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However, the need to “get them home”, rather than to ‘send them home’ that is expressed in this report, also further encourages a sense of distance from the discourses which surround *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the domestic context. It articulates as ‘common sense’ the idea of ‘our’ responsibility for the fate of the ‘evacuees’, which is premised upon their status of belonging to the national collectivity. As such, not only is the extraordinariness of the situation in which this group of people find themselves seeking refuge emphasised, but the boundary between ‘we – the British’ and refugees as ‘other’ is reasserted.

In the next section, we explore some of the key tensions and contradictions within the ‘evacuation narrative’ of the Lebanon

conflict in more detail and demonstrate how two very different priorities were often combined within the reports: a) the expression of a responsibility to assist and protect people fleeing danger; and b) the 'holding to account of the system' through which this process is managed.

## **Cyprus 'Under Pressure'**

With the deployment of military vessels and personnel to Lebanon to enable British civilians to leave the region between 18 and 20 July, the 'evacuation narrative' began to unfold. Two of the most important characteristics of this narrative were the logistical challenges posed by a large-scale 'rescue operation' under fire and the sovereign obligation to protect British citizens, especially the young and the vulnerable. The former raises some interesting issues with regard to journalists 'holding the system to account'. The latter, we would contend, brings to the fore some of the normative values upon which the issue of responsibility towards those fleeing danger are often based.

In a *BBC News* item on 19 July, the identity of British people 'as tourists' in Cyprus is compared with those forced there unexpectedly from Lebanon. Against a shot of a swimsuit attired couple wading in the sea against the backdrop of a large military vessel sailing by, the journalist explains that, "Cyprus is a small holiday island and cannot sustain a huge influx of evacuees", and that most have been "encouraged to board charter flights for the UK within hours of arrival".

Whilst the label 'evacuees', with its somewhat sympathetic connotations, serves to temper the impersonal tone conveyed by the necessity to 'move people on' and manage an "influx", a strong theme remains concerning the potential pressures to which Cyprus might be exposed. This is evocative of a 'burden upon scarce resources', which is familiar from the reporting of *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the domestic context. Furthermore, a strong emphasis upon numbers in these reports serves to compound the discursive resonances of this 'pressure on scarce resources' theme.

In the coverage we examined, the evacuation is referred to as a "massive operation" (*Channel 4 News* 20 July 2006), in which the number of people seeking refuge presents a serious challenge. For example, BBC correspondent Ben Brown explains how "the

evacuation of 1000s of foreign nationals from Beirut has gathered momentum today, and hundreds of British citizens are now on their way home" (*BBC News* 19 July 2006). Similarly, HMS Bulwark, a vessel transporting British citizens to Cyprus, is described by correspondent Clive Myrie as a "lifeline for hundreds, and by the end of the day, possibly thousands of people" (*BBC News* 20 July 2006). *ITV News* presenter Alistair Stewart gives a similar description of the vessel, which is engaged in "the biggest seaborne evacuation of people returning to Britain – 2000 in all; 1300 are spending the night, a long night aboard HMS Bulwark" (*ITV News* 20 July 2006). Similarly, in the anchor introduction to a *Channel 4 News* item about the evacuation, Jon Snow explains:

"Well now, crammed into cabins and corridors, almost 2000 British evacuees have set sail away from the destruction in Beirut – many of them on board the Royal Navy Ship, HMS Bulwark. Every space on the vessel was filled with people desperate to flee, but just as desperate about the friends and family they've been forced to leave behind." (*Channel 4 News* 20 July 2006)

Prevalent images in the coverage of large queues at the quayside in Beirut and conditions on board overcrowded rescue ships, also seem to call into play a familiar discursive structure that highlights the demands placed by migrants upon scarce resources, and a system which will be challenged by the sheer weight of the numbers of people it is required to process (*ITV News* 18 July 2006; *BBC News* 19 & 20 July 2006). In some reports, doubts about the authorities' ability to cope with the situation were explicitly articulated. For example, in a report focussing upon the experiences of 'the Gleeson family' from Scotland *ITV News* featured the anxious concerns of mother, Fiona Gleeson:

"When you're seeing everybody else from other countries are getting out and you're still here – not knowing what's happening or, you know, we just feel, you know no-one's sort of looking after you...especially when you've got a young family – that's your main concern." (*ITV News* 18 July 2006)

Such elements, we would argue, are somewhat resonant of the *system in crisis* discourse through which *asylum* and *refugee* issues in the domestic context were regularly covered in the broadcast

news during the monitoring period. Whilst singular in the particular manner in which these elements are articulated, the discourse through which the evacuation of British nationals in the Lebanon conflict was expressed seemed to appropriate key elements or characteristics from more established patterns of reporting. As such, the coverage of these events seemed to be captured, to a certain extent at least, by the discursive structures through which more 'conventional' *asylum* and *refugee* related news items we have identified in the domestic context were articulated. However, one important difference here with the *system in crisis* discourse surrounding asylum seekers and refugees in the domestic context is the explicit positioning of those seeking refuge as *subjected to* rather than *subjects of* the *crisis*. This key difference is examined in the next section.

## **Deserving/Undeserving Identities in the Evacuation Narrative**

By contrast with the more ambiguous and largely voiceless asylum seekers of our earlier case studies, it was clear that the British passport holding 'evacuees' are in no way 'responsible' for the situation in which they find themselves. Indeed, the question of 'responsibility' was instead firmly attached to the institutions of government. As such, a strong theme was the expectation that deliverance from a place of danger to one of safety ought to be smoothly managed. In some reports, this involved the inclusion of a poignant set of intertextual references which articulated something of a 'Dunkirk spirit'. The readiness and capability of the British state in discharging its 'duty of care' towards its citizens became an important object around which this discourse was orientated. BBC journalist Clive Myrie's report from Limassol, Cyprus, for example, opens with the depiction of the following scene:

"Soldiers from the first battalion – the Royal Welsh – keep an eye on HMS York tonight as she glides into dock at Limassol. Later, a human chain begins to unload all that the evacuees on board can take with them – the possessions of people whose lives have been turned upside down. This was a cargo of the frail and the vulnerable. Britain – now honouring the duty of care it owes its citizens in times of crisis." (*BBC News* 19 July 2006)

Here the 'evacuees' are positioned as distressed victims for whom 'all hands on deck' are striving to offer some kind of re-humanising support.

Alongside the prevalent images of women with young children, the deservedness of the 'evacuees' to care and compassion were also strongly conveyed by the, often critical, comments of the evacuees themselves which formed an important part of the coverage. This point is demonstrated in the following excerpts from interviews with British women waiting at the quayside in Beirut:

"It's absolute chaos – we came here because we were told to come here – that we would get on the boat out of here – and we've come, and it's an absolute mess – an absolute disaster. It's just really disappointing and really inhumane the way that they're treating people." (*BBC News* 19 July 2006)

"Everybody's getting stressed – we're all getting stressed and falling out and everything, you know. It's a nightmare – you come on holiday and you – you know it's...[breaks off, beginning to cry]" (*BBC News* 19 July 2006)

By contrast with these reports featuring British tourists and citizens 'with rights' to a safe passage, the notion of an identity 'less deserving' of such protection was introduced very strikingly in the coverage of *ITV News* of Sheik Omar Bakri Mohammed. In a series of reports, this individual's request for assistance from the UK authorities to escape the conflict is presented in the context of his controversial political reputation and 'inflammatory comments' in supporting the motivations of the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, and the 7 July 2005 bombings in London. Alastair Stewart describes the situation as follows:

"After the London bombings last year, given comments like that, there was a furore. He left Britain for Beirut. The Home Secretary then banned him from returning. Well now the bombs are falling on the Lebanese capital he says he wants to return to see his wife, six children and four grandchildren who still live here..." (*ITV News* 20 July 2006)

The implication that Omar Bakri Mohammed's past conduct disqualifies him from 'a right to refuge' is contrasted in Stewart's

anchor commentary with the identity of numerous 'deserving' others who also desire to escape the conflict with words such as, "he may have to wait a while for a decision...", and:

"So, Sheik Omar Bakri Mohammed - perhaps staying where he is for the time being, but around 1600 others wanting to get back to Britain left aboard two warships today in the biggest evacuation by the Royal Navy so far. (*ITV News* 20 July 2006)

By means of this example, the deserving/undeserving binary is more explicitly and assuredly articulated in the *ITV News* coverage of the evacuation. Those with a legitimate claim upon the protection of the British state are distinguished from those who apparently have no such claim. Also rendered clear here, however, is the conditionality of that protection – a point which would have seemed rather inappropriate to emphasise in the more general coverage of the evacuation, because of the immediacy of the conflict and the clear potential humanitarian consequences of being 'left behind'. Omar Bakri Mohammed's situation allowed for the idea of conditional humanitarian protection and the 'balance' between upholding *human rights* versus *public safety* (see Case Study II for more information on this issue) to penetrate this coverage – providing a further counterpoint to the 'deserving' identities of 'ordinary' British passport holders calling upon the UK's protection.

By contrast with the foreign nationals that were to be rescued, many reports also did highlight the dangers faced by those people who did not have the 'option' of leaving Lebanon. Indeed the focus on British passport holders seemed to be something that was often articulated in quite a reflexive way in the reporting. Some reports showed an awareness that there was something rather arbitrary about those with certain papers being allowed onboard the naval vessels, while their family members and others without the right papers were left behind. Also notable is a report on 20 July by *BBC News* correspondent Gavin Hewitt. He gives a degree of historical contextualisation of the circumstances through which some rights to refuge have been secured:

"People gathered early for evacuation. The British had made it clear that today was their best chance to leave. There was hope, but also frustration. This family was turned back – the man had a British passport, but his wife didn't.

She was Lebanese. There is here a real sense of relief amongst those leaving, but make no mistake, this is a tragedy for Lebanon. Many of these people got their British passports while fleeing the civil war twenty years ago. They returned here to rebuild the country, but now, they're leaving again."

As with our earlier observations about *refugee* stories in the contexts of *humanitarian crisis* and *climate change*, the inclusion of such background detail in this particular report serves to reintroduce an explanatory, contextual framework. Within this framework the logic of seeking refuge might be more legitimately expressed. In focussing on how the circumstances of a place of departure informs and legitimises people's motivations to leave it, these examples clearly re-humanise and re-articulate a far more sympathetic discourse about seeking refuge.

### **Conclusion: Disturbing the Dominant Discourse**

The tensions we have highlighted in the reporting of these unusual events opens the possibility to question dominant *asylum* discourse – or at least to disturb our easy everyday familiarity with it. In this different context for example, the idea that a balance may need to be struck between the obligation to provide humanitarian protection and the issue of scarce resources is less neatly absorbed into the 'common sense' of reporting. Rather, many of the issues which might usually be 'hidden' by the way asylum seekers and refugees are 'usually' represented in the broadcast news are revealed: for example, the arbitrariness of a system which only affords protection to a select few, and the conditionality of that right to protection.



## Case Studies Conclusion: Challenging Representations – The Need to Shift the Framework

Our case studies demonstrate how *asylum* and *refugee* issues can be significant elements within powerful news narratives that are not necessarily primarily concerned with these issues specifically or even *immigration*. Instead, without being the focus, *asylum* and *refugee* issues can serve a significant rhetorical purpose, either as one of the underlying driving forces behind a story (as demonstrated in the case study on *asylum* as a symptom of a *Home Office in chaos*), or as part of a shifting discursive context in which it is only a part (as demonstrated in the case study on the articulation of *human rights* and *security* in the *Afghan hijackers*' case). Within broadcast news, *asylum* and *refugee* issues attain meaning cumulatively through such examples and the reproduction of their position in the discursive web represented by our concept map (see 'Findings' section and Appendix I).

Our third case study has been concerned with the concept of 'relevance' in relation to a person's immigration status as well as the meaning of *asylum* and the concept of *seeking refuge* in different geographical and conceptual contexts. 'Relevance' has been shown to be a rather unreliable guiding principle. When the international is drawn into play and associated with concepts of *asylum* and *refuge*, the figure of the *refugee* is likely to be cast as far more 'authentic' than in the domestic context – but also as a figure deserving of 'our' sympathy and the duty of care of the authorities. The international scenarios we have examined are either dealt with as being so remote that they are best understood as belonging to a different genre of news, e.g., the *humanitarian crisis* in Darfur, or they are articulated with characteristics which seem somehow 'out of joint' with the contemporary times, e.g., the WWII connotations of 'evacuees' in Lebanon, or the futuristic 'things to come' connotations of *climate change refugees*.

In case studies II and II as well as the first part of case study III we have given a snapshot of the complexities encapsulated in more abstract form on our concept maps. With the latter part of case study III, we have gone beyond the discursive web represented by our domestically focused map. The analysis of news around *asylum* and *refugee* issues not circumscribed by UK and EU boundaries

showed a number of interesting differences and contradictions. These may offer some potential insights for the development of strategies to shift the discursive web in the domestic context. Thus, these case studies have served to highlight our central finding: in order to change the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the domestic context, the discursive web needs to be shifted.

## **Conclusion: Familiar Ideas and New Twists: The Web of ‘Common Sense’ in Broadcast News Coverage of ‘Asylum’ and ‘Refugee Issues’**

Although asylum and refugee issues do not constitute the ‘hot’ political topic for news they seemingly were a few years ago, this does not mean that their coverage is necessarily of less concern. It is certainly the case that current reporting in the broadcast news is less characterised by sensationalist stories about asylum seekers than previous research has found. (Buchanan et al., Article 19, 2003; Speers, Wales Media Forum, 2001) It is also not so peppered with obviously derogatory and, in legal terms, inaccurate labelling such as *bogus asylum seeker* or *illegal refugee* – a finding which corroborates trends noted in recent print news coverage. (Smart et al., ICAR, 2007)

Whilst these are encouraging observations, however, we would also wish to strongly emphasise that they do not mean that there are no longer any troubling issues with the way asylum and refugee issues are currently constructed within the broadcast news media. Our critical analysis of both the content and production processes of the coverage have allowed us to examine how and why certain patterns of ideas tend to structure the news narratives within which asylum and refugee issues feature. It is one of the main findings of our research that coverage of these issues continues to represent *asylum*, and the asylum system in particular, as a *problem*. We have also found that the ways in which negative ideas about *asylum* are constructed and reproduced are more indirect and implicit within news narratives than previous research has highlighted.

When *asylum* and *refugee issues* did feature in the coverage, their inclusion was largely in the form of an ‘incidental mention’ within news narratives focussing upon other topics. Although *asylum* rarely constituted the main theme of a story, it nonetheless seemed clear to us, as we monitored the coverage day by day, that when *asylum* did appear, it did so *as if* it might be assumed that it carried significant negative connotations. We have analysed this idea systematically and in a variety of ways in this study: through our detailed quantitative and qualitative content studies, interviews with journalists and through our concept mapping exercise.

We have found from our interviews and content analysis that *asylum* and *refugee issues* are now very rarely examined or discussed in depth in and of themselves. Rather, *asylum* is far more likely to be mentioned incidentally and, as our *Home Office in chaos* case study in particular highlights, to feature as if its negative connotations might be ‘taken for granted’ within news narratives. As such, when the subject of *asylum* does feature, it appears in a manner that suggests that most of the questions that might surround it as an issue have already been settled. In other words: what *asylum* ‘stands for’ within a news item is assumed to be something which ‘everyone is aware of’, rather than a subject that might require further explanation, discussion or debate. It only ‘makes sense’ to mention *asylum* ‘incidentally’ within a news item, we would argue, because a set of assumed *common sense* assumptions and associations with the word *asylum* are called up by its very enunciation. It is seemingly no longer necessary to explicitly talk about *asylum issues*, such as the cost of asylum seekers to the tax payer, pressures upon welfare and public service provision, asylum seeker numbers and failures in those government policies, in order for *asylum* to be meaningfully articulated as something which is ‘undesirable’. The fact that *asylum* has historically been discussed in stigmatising terms and represented as a ‘controversial issue’ contributes to a set of ‘sedimented’ ideas now investing the term *asylum* with negative connotations.

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In this respect, it is also important to note the general lack of differentiation within broadcast news discourse between *asylum* as a humanitarian concept and obligation of the state under international law on the one hand, and *asylum* as a system created by the ever-restrictive policy measures introduced by governments since the early 1990s and domestic political issue on the other. In our interviews, journalists persuasively explained that reporting asylum policy implementation as having been *in crisis* in the past was a very different thing to asserting that *asylum* and *refugee issues* had in and of themselves constituted a *crisis* facing the country. Their purpose in reporting such stories about the asylum system was, they asserted, very much directed towards fulfilling their ‘fifth estate’ role, and the concept of *crisis* functioned in this respect as a device which opened up the possibility of discussing the shortcomings of politicians and their policies in order to hold the government to account. Although, as one of our interviewees

cautioned, *crisis* is a rather easily coined term and one frequently deployed by journalists, through our close analysis of the coverage we have found that *crisis* continues to constitute a significant feature of news narratives featuring *asylum* and *refugee issues*. Moreover, perhaps despite journalists' best intentions, the distinction between asylum policy and humanitarian ideal often became buried in practice, as we have noted with regard to the invocation of *asylum* as a convenient shorthand explanation, or at least reference point, for the *crisis* blighting the failing Home Office. It is in part through such subtle and incidental mentioning of *asylum*, we would argue, that its meaning is constructed and reproduced in the broadcast news media in powerfully negative ways.

Negative ideas are also associated with *asylum*, however, because of the nature of the topics in relation to which the incidental mentioning of *asylum* most frequently occurs. As well as political blunders and policy mismanagement, our research found that *asylum* and *refugee issues* were most often a feature of news stories focusing upon *crime*, *terrorism*, *illegal immigration* and *human rights*. Predominantly, *asylum* and *refugee issues* feature in the broadcast news in connection with themes that seem to have intrinsically threatening connotations. These collocations, we have argued, are an important factor in producing the discursive web illustrated by our concept map. Throughout this report, we have identified a number of different ways in which collocations are constructed within the broadcast news. These have included the incidental mentioning of the immigration status of a suspect within a crime story, (for example, as in the coverage of the case of drug dealer Abdullah Baybasin), and, the common classification, using a range of verbal and visual cues, of *asylum* stories with others focusing on quite disparate topics involving violent *crime* and *terrorism* (for example, as in our case study of the *Afghan hijackers*). In the latter, we have highlighted how, under the rubric of a debate surrounding whether *human rights* concerns compromise *public safety*, a set of mediated links were established which could contribute cumulatively to a 'common sense' association between *asylum* and *refugee issues* and *terrorism*.

Such collocations are what, in practice, create, sustain and reproduce as 'common sense' connections between issues which form the discursive web that our concept maps depict. Collocations

establish patterns of association between issues which have no *necessary* relations. Yet these relations are powerful when taken for granted as a meaningful context for the discussion of *asylum* and *refugee issues*.

The meaningfulness of these collocations is also dependent upon their interconnection with a wider discursive web of issues, concepts and narratives. The particular discursive web that we have mapped – anchored by four overarching issues, *politics*, *changing society*, *public safety* and *human rights* – represents the complex pattern of relations surrounding *asylum* and *refugee issues* as we encountered them through the lens of the broadcast news media. The concept maps also represent a framework of the issues as they stand at a particular historical moment, which, whilst seemingly robust, is ultimately not fixed but open to change.

We are not suggesting, however, that these ‘common sense’ patterns of association and networks of concepts and ideas necessarily result from the conscious design of journalists. Rather, as we have asserted in our analysis of the interviews, the stories which journalists produce featuring *asylum* and *refugee issues* are influenced both by their understandings and beliefs about the topic, and the routine pressures, institutional forces and constraints which characterise their professional practice. Journalists clearly do not operate in a vacuum, and the formation of their understandings and beliefs about *asylum* and *refugee issues* are, at least to some extent, captured and influenced by the same ‘common sense’ structure of ideas as everybody else’s. Indeed, whilst journalists are clearly very important actors in constructing this discursive web of ideas, they also do not generate it alone. Rather, orientated towards reporting news ‘from above’, journalists operate (as others have noted, e.g., ICAR 2004; Lewis et. al. 2006) in a ‘symbiotic relationship’ with politicians and their public relations professionals. However, it is clear that when *asylum* does become news, its relevance is usually justified with reference to future policy proposals or political debates concerned with the efficiency or rigour of the current system, rather than the experiences of the asylum seekers and refugees subjected to those measures. And, as the various policy proposals and initiatives of recent years have been dominated by concerns to *fortify borders* against potentially *dangerous intruders* and securing the asylum system against the exploitation of ‘undesirable’ migrants, a news agenda, in which

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connections between *asylum* and *refugee issues*, *criminality* and *public safety issues* regularly occur, is perhaps hardly surprising.

Indeed, our detailed content analysis of the coverage has highlighted that the focus of broadcast coverage seems to have shifted with the policy agenda of recent years. As such, it is now the question of deportation – the removal of refused asylum seekers or other migrants from the country – that is very often the object of discussion when *asylum* is the main theme of a news story.

Reducing the number of asylum seekers remaining in the country once their claims have been refused has been a driving force of much recent asylum and immigration policy. The idea of ‘efficiency’ within the asylum system which characterises the aims of the government’s New Asylum Model, and Five Year Plan, for example, is premised upon a kind of ‘balance sheet’ approach to the management of asylum seekers, where the target is to deport more people than apply to enter. In this context it is therefore also hardly surprising that the broadcast news media regularly feature the theme of deportation numbers when reporting on *asylum* and *refugee issues*.

Our research has also highlighted the political self-reflexivity of journalistic practice in this area, especially in respect of self-perceptions of how ‘liberal sensitivities’ surrounding *asylum* and *refugee issues* may have influenced coverage in the past. One important finding is that for several of the journalists, their ‘political compass’ seemed to be based upon a certain perception of public opinion as being largely ‘less liberal’ than themselves. Journalists talked about redressing an ‘imbalance’ in their reporting in relation to the position of ‘the audience’ on these issues. It was therefore not just the abstract news value of *objectivity* that journalists talked about in relation to producing ‘balanced’ reporting. The idea that the BBC in particular had, in the past, reported in a manner that was ‘too liberal’ and as such was somehow ‘out of kilter’ with the mainstream of public opinion, emerged as a strong theme from several of our interviews. Journalists reflected that their reporting of these issues had probably been rather too cautious: articulating a metropolitan, liberal elitist perspective, which was perhaps rather too concerned about inflaming social tensions. There was clearly a very conscious sense amongst our interviewees that this had positioned the voice of the BBC closer to those of charities and NGOs working in this area, than to the general public on these

issues. Furthermore, some suggested that tabloid newspapers had been more likely to accurately reflect public opinion than their own coverage. The sense that an excessively cautionary approach to reporting these issues had led to the broadcast media having 'missed' or under-reported the *immigration story* was also related to this set of reflections.

In this, our study has identified an important tension between competing journalistic aims in reporting *asylum* and related issues. On the one hand, journalists clearly endeavour to strive for *objectivity* and *impartiality*, but they also consciously situate this endeavour in relation to their perception of a public consensus on these issues which is already 'out there', and beyond the day to day perspective of the 'liberal intelligentsia'. We would argue that this idea is potentially rather concerning, not least because the news media does not simply report events and reflect ideas that are out there, it also helps to form them. As our concept maps and case studies illustrate, negativity is part of the structure of the news discourse surrounding *asylum* and *refugee issues*. The issues are not necessarily discussed in and of themselves, but rather are associated with the idea of *threat* through their regular collocation with topics such as *crime* and *terrorism*. The question of how to change the negative connotations of the word *asylum* constructed within such narratives and discourses is therefore extremely complex. The successful elimination of certain phrases and labels as well as challenging 'inaccuracies' in reporting clearly cannot be the only answer. As the changing meanings around the term *human rights* documented in our case study on the *Afghan hijackers* demonstrates, even previously 'triumphant' concepts (Douzinas 2000) with overwhelmingly positive connotations within popular culture and public discourse can be transformed to become less convincing, and even to take on highly negative meanings.

Rather, we need also to find ways to challenge the negatively charged collocations we have identified, and to shift and reconfigure the discursive web – the context within which such negative ideas about *asylum* seem to 'make sense'.

Journalists may not consciously or deliberately link particular negative themes or ideas with *asylum* and *refugee issues*, but they regularly do put them together. Our close and critical analysis of the coverage is not intended as an attack upon journalists or to tell

*On the one hand, journalists clearly endeavour to strive for 'objectivity' and 'impartiality', but they also consciously situate this endeavour in relation to their perception of a public consensus on these issues which is already 'out there', and beyond the day to day perspective of the 'liberal intelligentsia'.*



them how to do their jobs. What is important, in this respect, is to seek to better understand the complexity of discursive context that influences and constrains the possibilities for journalistic practice. In such a context, there can be no simple 'positive' or 'negative' story about *asylum*. However it is clear from our research that very different narratives of *asylum* are possible – precisely the kinds of narratives that NGOs, refugee councils and the UNHCR produce when they engage in myth-busting activities about media coverage of *asylum* – but that these are firmly located in the foreign news category of coverage. It might be taking our findings too far to suggest that in relation to these *other* places there is also no *imagined* British public opinion constraining the *liberal* journalist or editor from representing sympathetically the *human rights issues* about *asylum* and asylum seekers. Whatever the reason, we have here the makings of a different set of collocations and a different kind of concept map, one which in time, might actually manage to 'form' rather than 'follow' public opinion by providing the 'public' with information and the whole story (whatever it may be) rather than a set of alarming and negatively connoted collocations with no narrative substance.

It is possible that the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express* are right, and that that is what the public wants. What we have to ask is, whether that is what public service broadcasting is, or should be, about, remembering that three of the broadcasters whose coverage we analysed have a public service remit. That is a much wider question, but is one that the findings of this research point to as a central issue, if the concept map in which these issues, and the journalists dealing with them, are now caught, is ever actually to change.

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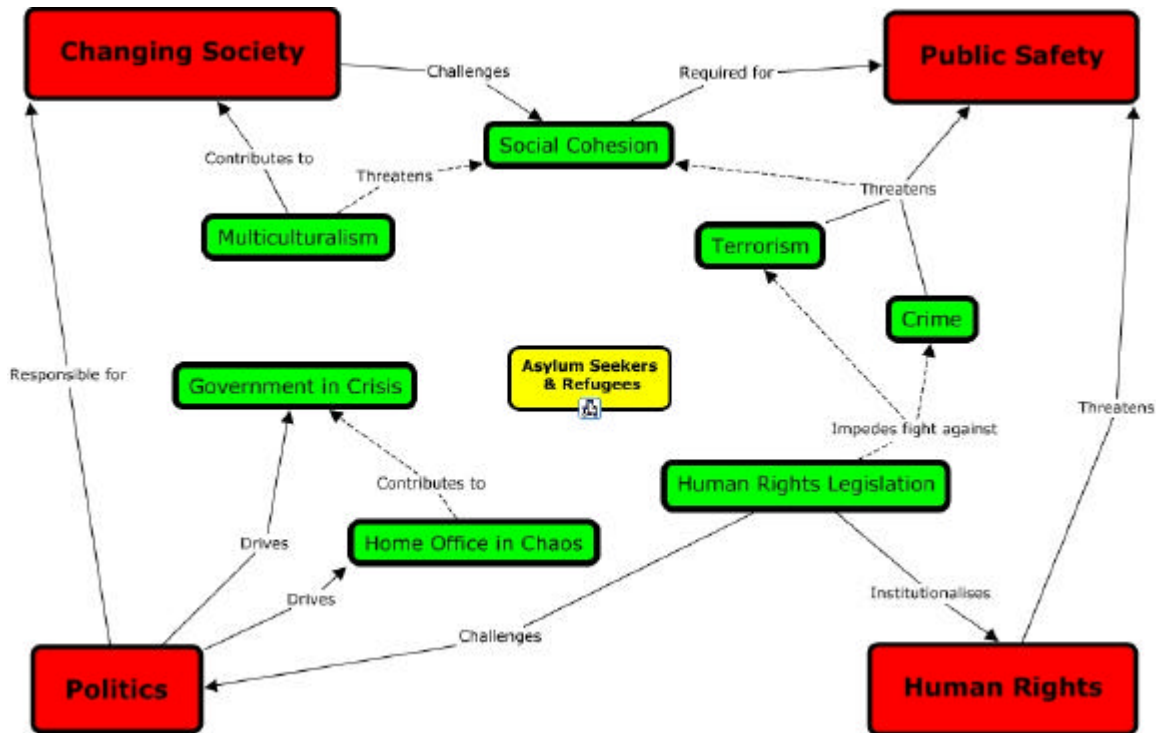
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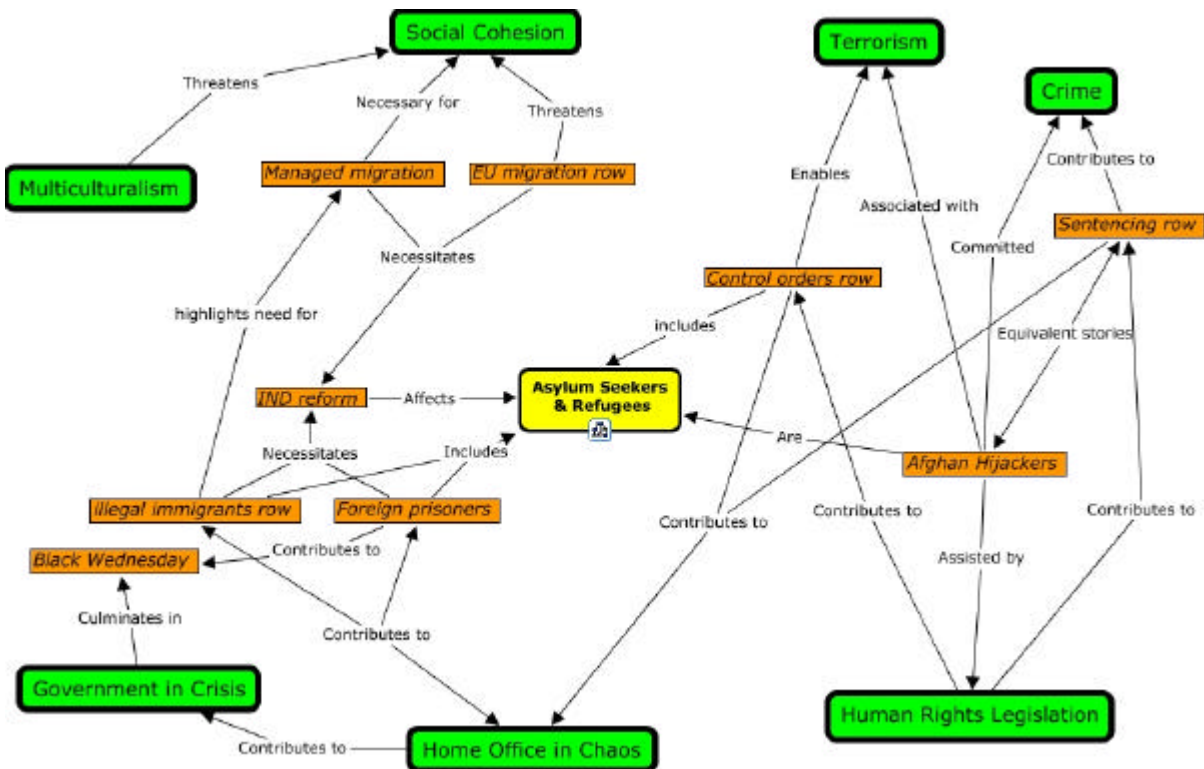
# Appendix

## Appendix I: Concept Maps

Concept Map 1

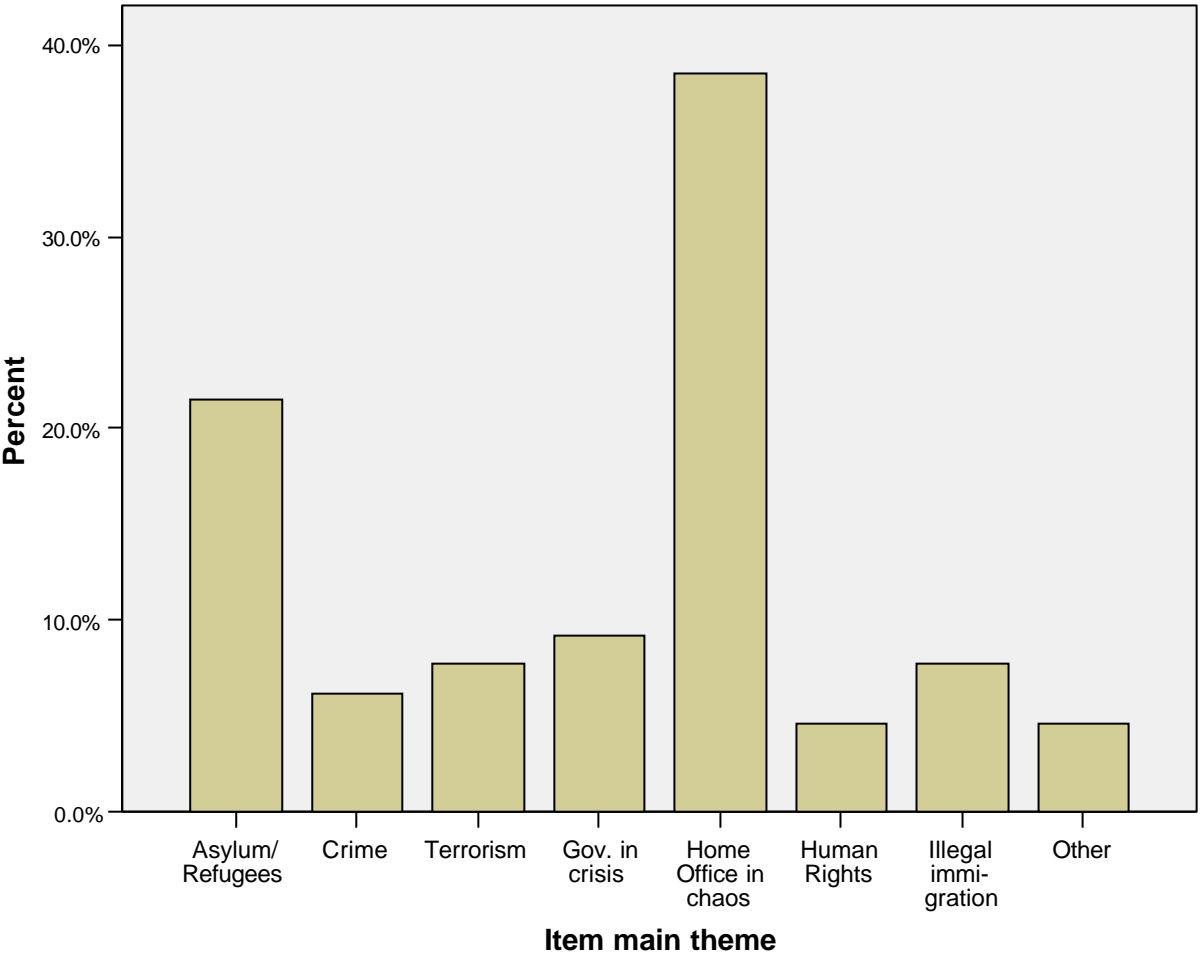


Concept Map 2



# Appendix II: Graphs & Tables

Graph 1: Item main theme



Tables 1 & 2

Table 1 shows the total number of items filtered out as well as the number of codable items for each month and for each news programme, e.g. in July BBC 1 News at 10 had 5 codable items out of a total of 18 items filtered out. The unshaded area represents the core sample that forms part of the SPSS analysis. The shaded area shows the data for the remainder of the monitoring period.

Table 2 covers the same time period as table 1. It shows the number of items filtered out from the local Welsh windows on BBC 1 News at 10 and ITV 1 News at 10.30. The table is shaded because this material is not part of the core sample.

Table 1: National coverage of immigration, refugee and asylum issues:

<i>Month</i> <i>Channel</i>	April (from 24 <sup>th</sup> )	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct. (until 24 <sup>th</sup> )	
BBC 1	2 / 7	5 / 29	1 / 16	5 / 18	4 / 23	1 / 17	0/18	
Channel 4	2 / 8	18 / 34	3 / 20	4 / 13	2 / 12	5 / 9	5/13	
ITV 1	0 / 5	10 / 28	0 / 7	2 / 11	2 / 11	0 / 4	1/6	
Sky News	0 / 7	9 / 31	2 / 10	2 / 22	4 / 12	0 / 4	1/9	<i>Total</i>
<i>Total/mth.</i>	4 / 27	42 / 122	6 / 53	13 / 64	12 / 58	6 / 34	7/46	65 / 266
								90 / 404

Table 2: Local coverage of immigration, refugee and asylum issues:

BBC Wales	0/0	0/1	0/1	0/2	0/2	0/0	0/0
ITV Wales	0/1	1/1	0/0	0/0	0/1	0/0	0/0

Table 3: Number of items/units/coded units per channel

	BBC	ITV	C4	Sky	Total
<b>Total Items</b>	13	12	27	13	65
<b>Total Units</b>	59	51	151	57	318
<b>Fully Coded Units</b>	23	16	44	22	105

Table 4: Asylum related themes

	Number	Cumulative Percent
cost/strain on services of asylum seeker	2	2
means of entry	17	16.8
numbers of asylum seekers/ refugees	13	12.9
announcement of government/party policy	7	6.9
Accommodation	3	3
voucher/benefit system	2	2
the UK asylum system/ process/policy in general	31	30.7
asylum seeker/refugees as perpetrators of crime	24	23.8
asylum seekers/refugees as terrorists	19	18.8
asylum seekers/refugees as victims of crime	11	10.9
Asylum seekers/refugees as victims of racial abuse/attack	1	1
Detention	7	6.9
Deportation	42	41.6
Why choose the UK?	2	2.0
Health	1	1
Employment	10	9.9
funding from the lottery/ community funds	1	1
reasons for refugees fleeing their country	14	13.9
comparison between treatment of asylum seekers and British residents	1	1
a welcoming or supportive initiative by local residents/ local government etc.	1	1
government/Labour spin on numbers of arrival/ deportations etc.	10	9.9
closure of border/barriers	12	11.9
Other	17	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>245.5</b>



Table 5: Use of labels

	Number	Percent
asylum seeker(s)	38	29.0%
refugee(s)	18	13.7%
illegal immigrant(s)	11	8.4%
immigrant(s) or migrant(s)	2	1.5%
failed/rejected asylum seeker(s)	18	13.7%
ethnic group/nationality	16	12.2%
Individual by name	5	3.8%
Other	23	17.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 6: Main source

	Number	Percent
Politician	29	27.6%
central government official	2	1.9%
Home Office/IND	6	5.7%
immigration official	1	1.0%
Refugee NGO	1	1.0%
pressure group other (e.g. Migrationwatch)	1	1.0%
campaigner/supporter	3	2.9%
other legal professional	12	11.4%
resident/member of the public	1	1.0%
Refugee adult male	3	2.9%
Media	9	8.6%
Other	5	4.8%
unspecified source	4	3.8%
Unsourced	24	22.9%
no attribution	4	3.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 7: Additional sources

	Number	Percent
Politician	72	26.9%
central government official	16	6.0%
Home Office/IND	17	6.3%
immigration official	9	3.4%
police spokesperson	8	3.0%
NGO/voluntary sector	3	1.1%
refugee NGO	2	.7%
pressure group other (e.g. Migrationwatch)	8	3.0%
campaigner/supporter	1	.4%
expert/academic	1	.4%
solicitor representing an asylum seeker	4	1.5%
other legal professional	10	3.7%
other professional (medical, teaching etc.)	1	.4%
resident/member of the public	8	3.0%
refugee adult female	1	.4%
refugee adult male	7	2.6%
Publication	1	.4%
Media	4	1.5%
Other	23	8.6%
unspecified source	13	4.9%
No additional source	26	9.7%
Un sourced	32	11.9%
No attribution	1	.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 8: Number of references to asylum seekers/refuges and/or asylum system/policy/process

	Number	Percent
Asylum seekers/refugees	47	44.8
Asylum system/process/policy	24	22.9
mention of asylum seekers/refugees and asylum system/process/policy	34	32.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Appendix III: Running Orders

T= Teaser; OT= Other News Teaser (introduced by second presenter); WT=Welsh News Teaser; N= News Report (short report read by anchor); ON= Other News Report (report read by second presenter); WN=Welsh News Report; S= Story (a more substantial piece, e.g., package, interview, correspondent report etc.); OS=Other Story (story introduced by second presenter); WS=Welsh Story (story introduced by Welsh News presenter); H=Headline Recap

<i>Channel 4 News</i> Broadcast at 7 pm Length: 57 minutes Presented from London	<i>BBC 1 News at 10</i> Length: 35 minutes Presented from London and Beirut	<i>ITV 1 News at 10.30</i> Length: 30 minutes Presented from London and Beirut
<p>T: Fighting between the Israeli military and the Hezbollah in Lebanon: US peace efforts fail</p> <p>Title sequence</p> <p>T: Lebanon: US peace efforts fail</p> <p>T: Woman prisoner suicide due to prison move</p> <p>T: Tate Modern has a new gallery</p> <p><b>OT : New border checks to tighten up on asylum</b></p> <p>OT: Compensation for nuclear test veteran</p> <p>OT: Environmental cost of July heat wave</p> <p>S: Lebanon: civilian cost</p> <p>S: Lebanon:</p>	<p>T: Stephen Lawrence murder investigation: corruption claims (presented from London=L)</p> <p>T: Lebanon: fighting continues despite diplomacy (from Beirut=B)</p> <p>WT: Celebrations over Government of Wales Bill</p> <p>WT: Drowning investigation</p> <p>Title sequence</p> <p>S: Stephen Lawrence murder investigation: corruption claims (L)</p> <p>S: Stephen Lawrence murder investigation: corruption claims (L)</p> <p>T: special programme on Stephen Lawrence murder investigation: corruption claims (L)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: fighting</p>	<p>T: Lebanon: Southern Lebanese civilians under attack (B)</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> Title sequence</p> <p>T: Lebanon: Southern Lebanese civilians under attack (B)</p> <p>T: Lebanon: international diplomatic efforts (B)</p> <p>T: Terror trial involving Sun's fake sheik ends in acquittals (B)</p> <p>T: Football: Italian football scandal (B)</p> <p>WT: Teen-ager drowns in river</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Title sequence</p> <p>T: Lebanon: Southern Lebanese civilians under attack (B)</p> <p>T: Lebanon: Beirut under attack (B)</p> <p>T: Lebanon: international diplomatic efforts (B)</p>

<p>Israeli defiance (segment interrupted)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: cluster bomb use</p> <p>S: Lebanon: US peace diplomacy</p> <p>S: Lebanon: interview with Israeli cabinet minister</p> <p>S: Lebanon: interview with Lebanese ambassador to UN</p> <p>S: Lebanon: interview with Washington correspondent</p> <p>OS: Environmental cost of heat wave</p> <p>ON: Heat wave energy cost in USA</p> <p>ON: Three acquitted of <i>terrorism</i> links in London</p> <p>ON: More US troops for Iraq</p> <p>ON: Police hunt for rapist</p> <p>ON: 10 UK tourists arrested in Crete for unruly behaviour</p> <p>T: Compensation for nuclear test veteran</p> <p>T: Woman prisoner suicide due to prison move</p> <p>Commercial break</p> <p><b>S: Asylum</b></p>	<p>continues despite diplomacy (B)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: possible ceasefire/peace deal (B)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: UN humanitarian aid appeal (B)</p> <p>N: Lebanon: Hezbollah's strength (B)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: UN observers killed by Israeli army (B)</p> <p><b>S: Home Office/Immigration Service reform: tougher border controls (L)</b></p> <p>N: David Cameron visits Afghanistan (L)</p> <p>N: Welsh Assembly given more powers (L)</p> <p>N: LibDem MP Mark Oaten to stand down at next election (L)</p> <p>N: Man questioned over sexual assault (L)</p> <p>S: PM urges more healthy lifestyles to avoid NHS costs (L)</p> <p>T: News 24: Stephen Lawrence (L)</p> <p>T: News 24: Italian football scandal (L)</p> <p>WS: celebrations over Government of Wales Bill</p> <p>WS: 1<sup>st</sup> drowning investigation</p> <p>WN: 2<sup>nd</sup> drowning investigation</p> <p>WN: Aftermath of CEO quitting Welsh Ambulance Service</p> <p>WN: Construction work on major development begins</p> <p>WN: Weather</p>	<p>S: Lebanon: Southern Lebanese civilians under attack (B)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: Beirut under attack/UN observers killed by Israeli army (B)</p> <p>N: Lebanon: attacks on Israel (B)</p> <p>N: Lebanon: Hezbollah's continuing strength/Israeli strategy (B)</p> <p>S: Lebanon: international diplomatic efforts (B)</p> <p>T: Lebanon: destroyed lives in Beirut (B)</p> <p><b>S: Home Office/Immigration Service reform: tougher entry/exit controls (L)</b></p> <p>S: Terror trial involving Sun's fake sheik ends in acquittals (L)</p> <p>S: Football: Italian football scandal (L)</p> <p>N: Markets (L)</p> <p>S: Dinosaur skeleton goes on display in Scarborough (L)</p> <p>WN: Teen-ager drowns in river</p> <p>WS: Drowning deaths in Wales</p> <p>WN: Government of Wales bill passes</p> <p>WN: Man wins right to sue police over house fire rescue</p> <p>WT: Madonna to come to Cardiff/tickets to be won</p> <p>WS: Weather</p> <p>H: Middle East Crisis: civilians trapped (B)</p>
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<b>reform - new border checks</b> H: Lebanon S: Woman prisoner suicide due to prison move OS: Private hospital supplements to NHS care ON: LibDem MP Mark Oaten to leave parliament at next election ON: Some youth leaders decide to wear hoodies (hooded tops) ON: Jockey apologises for head butting horse ON: Markets ON: Weather S: Compensation for nuclear test veteran T: Tate Modern gets a new gallery  Commercial break  S: Tate Modern gets new gallery H: Lebanon: Lebanese ambassador to UN appeals to world for help S: Lebanon: Interview ambassador, former head Israel/Egypt multinational force  End title sequence	WH: Celebrations over Government of Wales Bill H: Stephen Lawrence murder investigation: corruption claims (L) H: Lebanon: UN observers killed (L) T: <i>Newsnight</i> : Middle East Crisis (L)  End title sequence	H: Middle East Crisis: UN observers killed (B) H: Middle East Crisis: diplomatic efforts (B) S: Middle East Crisis: destroyed lives in Beirut (B) N: Front pages: <i>Times</i> : NHS, <i>Telegraph</i> : cancer drug availability, <i>Sun</i> : Stephen Lawrence corruption allegations, <i>Daily Mail</i> : electrical goods recycling (B)  End title sequence
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## ***Appendix IV: Interviews with Journalists***

### **List of questions**

- Q1: What is your name and title?
- Q2: What is your role in the newsroom?
- Q3: Where do you get your stories from? (e.g. Other media? Press releases? Sources?)
- Q4: When do you/your organisation cover asylum/refugee issues? What makes it newsworthy?
- Q5.1: What status do these stories have in the overall newsroom agenda?
- Q5.2: We have noticed that there are not that many stories focussing on asylum and refugee issues. Do you think it has slipped off of the agenda lately?
- Q6: How is the story assigned? Do you have reporters you consider specialists for these issues? How detailed is their brief for a story?
- Q7: How is the story integrated into the news programme? (e.g. positioning, editorial intervention during the production process)
- Q8: Once a story is assigned – What are the stages in producing it?
- Q9: How much time do you usually have to produce a piece?
- Q10.1: How many people to a team? What roles do they play?
- Q10.2: Who writes the anchor intros?
- Q11: How would you choose your sources for asylum and refugee issues?
- Q12: Who do you call for an opinion/statement?
- Q13: Who do you think has the expertise/profile to speak on these issues?
- Q14: Who do you see as the pro- and anti- or critical towards asylum representatives?
- Q15: From our analysis we've discovered that Migrationwatch UK seems to have a reputation as a good media source: It is fairly new organisation. When did you notice them first?
- Q16: What do you think it is about Migrationwatch that means that it appears so regularly?
- Q17: There seems to be not comparable pressure group on the pro-migrants side in terms of media profile: Do they do something wrong? What could they do better?
- Q18: Let's talk about images now: We have noticed that the pieces often consist of stock footage (such as illegal entry, deportations etc.), PowerPoint-style graphics and footage of buildings. Are there particular difficulties in illustrating asylum stories in terms of images, footage?
- Q19: Back to the stock footage of deportations or illegal entry: How do you actually choose from this material to put a particular piece together?
- Q20: Another recurring type of image consists of Home Office buildings, asylum application forms, letters, passports being

stamped. Can you tell us about the kind of message you are trying to convey when using these types of images?

Q21: We have noticed that a lot of the stories around immigration and asylum contain PowerPoint-style presentations: Are these kinds of stories particularly suited for this treatment?

Q22: In terms of graphics, i.e. studio background or PowerPoint backgrounds – How are the images selected?

Q23: From our research it seems that asylum policy is covered on a more abstract level, the policy agenda rather than policy implementation. What may be the reasons for it? Could be the availability of images to illustrate a story? Or access to asylum seekers?

Q24: Why do you think the experiences of asylum seekers so rarely make it onto TV?

Q25: In the coverage we looked immigration and asylum are often talked about in terms of crisis. What for you are the key characteristics of this crisis?

Q26: Are there stories that you feel you have to cover, even if you'd rather not? (E.g. new government policy.) How much pressure do you feel to cover the agenda of particular departments, parties, politicians?

Q27: What is the mood in editorial meetings towards these stories?

Q28: One particular story that seemed to run on for a long time was the foreign prisoners' deportation row. What made this story so attractive? Around the same time Patricia Hewitt was under intense pressure from the nurses. Why was this story less strongly pursued than the foreign prisoners' deportation row?

Q29: Are there issues that involve asylum seekers or refugees that you consider the great untold story? How come no one tells it?

(Q30: What do you see as the use of the longer more investigative or considered pieces or series?)

Q31: Do you sometimes try to avoid talking about asylum?

Q32: Even if a story is not about asylum or refugee issues, but say about an asylum seeker who committed a crime or terror suspect, sometimes his or her immigration status is mentioned and sometimes it isn't. When do you think a person's immigration status becomes relevant? Are there specific newsroom guidelines you follow?

Q33: In stories about these issues, are there terms that you would like to use but cannot or don't feel you can?

Q34: Where do you think public opinion is on the specific issue of asylum and refugees?

Q35: Does this differ from your audience's opinion?

Q36: Can you recall and describe a story on these issues that you felt was particularly successful?

## **Project information given to journalists**

### **TV News Coverage of Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies are currently carrying out research on the television coverage of asylum seekers and refugees. This has involved monitoring the television evening news coverage over a six month period from late April, 2006. We are doing a comparative study of newspaper coverage of the main asylum and refugee stories during the same period. We are also working with the Institute for Public Policy Research on public responses to the coverage.

We are particularly interested in why and how the issues are covered and in the way the stories develop and are presented.

The research is funded by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies and Oxfam. Results will be published in an independent report produced by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies.

We are grateful for your participation in the project.

#### *Principal Investigator*

Terry Threadgold

#### *Research Team*

Bernhard Gross

Kerry Moore

Sadie Clifford

Nick Mosdell

## **Consent form signed by journalists**

Consent Form - Confidential data

I understand that my participation in this project will involve participating in an interview which will take approximately one to one and a half hours.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.

I understand that, unless confidentiality is waived, the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the Principle Investigator and the research team can trace this information back to me individually. The information will be retained for up to five years when it will be deleted/destroyed. I understand that I can ask for the information I provide to be deleted/destroyed at any time and, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, I can have access to the information at any time.

I also understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the results of the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Professor Terry Threadgold, Head, Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies.

I agree, do not agree to my name being used in the research report.

Signed:

Date:



## **Appendix V: Coding Guide & Forms**

### **Glossary**

#### ***Caption:***

The text box that regularly features containing the title assigned to the news item by the broadcaster. For example, the red and black box used by BBC News for their story title caption, and the blue strip used by ITV news for their story title caption.

#### ***Item:***

A news story in its entirety as it features within a news programme. An item would be likely to contain a number of units (see below). For example, collectively the succession of units: Teaser; Anchor report; Package; Headline; would be referred to collectively as an 'item', where each of these units deals with content from the same story or theme, e.g. Afghan hijackers.

#### ***Units of analysis (Units):***

The sections of the news programmes identified and isolated for coding in our content analysis, and which remained useful working definitions in our case-study analysis. Our research identified twelve different generic categories for which working definitions were devised as follows:

##### ***Teaser/Trailer***

A short unit preceding the main news story 'teasing' the audience that a story to feature later in the programme. Also often referred to as a 'trailer', it is usually delivered by the anchor at the beginning of the news programme, and can be pre- or post- the title sequence.

##### ***Anchor Intro***

A unit which introduces another associated unit (e.g. a package/2-way/roundtable etc.). It is a long or short introductory unit, and may be illustrated with graphics, image or footage. It does not include the very short 'hand-over' phrases which anchors often use, such as, 'over to you, Jim', which may precede a package or other unit. These phrases were treated as part of the package or other unit.

##### ***Live correspondent: report***

A 'live to camera' unit in which a correspondent answers a single question from the anchor. This category does not include a correspondent's own introduction to their package or their summary of it following the pre-recorded material. A *Live correspondent: report* becomes a *Live correspondent: 2-way* if there is a further interruption or more than one question from the anchor.

##### ***Live correspondent: 2 way***

A live to camera unit in which an anchor interviews a correspondent there may also be a '3 way' which would include the anchor plus two correspondents in a similar format (in our research this was coded as 'other').

### *Package*

A unit delivered by the correspondent, which can either be narrated live (e.g. correspondent in the studio presenting with a backdrop of graphics), or pre-recorded (e.g. correspondent narrates edited news footage). A package also includes any pieces of uninterrupted live narration from a correspondent in the field (e.g. introducing or summarising or developing their own pre-recorded material, so long as there is no further contribution from the anchor).

### *Anchor Outro*

A brief unit in which the anchor signals the closure of a correspondent's piece. It is equivalent to the anchor intro, but occurs following a package or 2-way.

### *Standard Interview*

A unit in which an interview between an anchor and non-journalistic source takes place.

### *Roundtable*

A unit in which an interview between an anchor and more than one non-journalistic source takes place.

### *Anchor Report*

An anchor narrates the entire unit, which may include audio-visual footage or possibly graphics. This often happens for less important news items e.g. 'other news' or 'the markets'.

### *Headline Recap*

A short unit summarising a main news story that has featured earlier in the programme.

### *Images/graphics over titles/credits*

Images/graphics that run concurrently with the introductory title or finishing credits.

### *Other (state which)*

Any other distinct unit of analysis which is not outlined above (e.g. 3way/4 way etc.)

## **Coding Schema**

### **A. Unit of analysis**

1. Teaser
2. Anchor Intro
- 3 Live correspondent: report
- 4 Live correspondent: 2 way
5. Package
6. Anchor Outro
7. Standard interview
8. Roundtable
9. Anchor report
10. Headline recap
11. Images/graphics over titles/credits

12. Sky banner
13. Sky breaking news banner
14. Other (state which)

**B. Position in running order**

1. Lead story
2. Elsewhere in running order

**C. Duration of unit**

1. Duration (seconds)
2. Relative duration (unit duration/bulletin duration)

**D. Reference to asylum seekers/refugees or asylum policy/system in unit of analysis**

1. Asylum seekers/refugees
2. asylum system/process/policy
3. no mention of asylum seekers/refugees or asylum system/process/policy
4. Not applicable

**E. Reference to immigration/immigrants in unit of analysis**

1. Reference to immigration/migrants
2. Reference to immigration policy/system
3. No mention of immigrants/migrants/immigration policy or system
4. Not applicable

**F: What is the main theme of the unit?**

\*\*\*\*\*

**G. Speakers**

1. Anchor
2. Correspondent
3. Correspondent & other speaker(s)
4. Anchor & correspondent(s)
5. Anchor & other speaker(s) (not correspondent)

**H. Local, national, international focus**

1. Local (town or village)
2. Regional (e.g. Yorkshire; Kent)
3. National UK
4. National England
5. National Wales
6. National Scotland
7. International

**Main source**

NB A source can be a direct quotation or indirect reporting of what someone has said (e.g. 'friends of the man said' – the friends are a source)

1. politician (name person & party)
2. central government official
3. local government official
4. Home office/IND
5. immigration official
6. police spokesperson
7. NGO/voluntary sector
8. Refugee NGO
9. Refugee community organisation
10. Pressure group (other: state which) e.g. *Migrationwatch*

11. Campaigner/supporter (not belonging to a specific organisation)
12. Expert/academic
13. Solicitor representing an asylum seeker
14. Other legal professional
15. Other professional (medical, teaching etc.)
16. Resident/member of the public
17. Refugee adult female
18. Refugee adult male
19. Refugee child (under 16)
20. Publication (quoting a publication rather than a person)
21. Viewer
22. Think Tank/ Research institute
23. Media
24. Other (name)
25. Unspecified source (i.e. 'it is said/thought' or 'it is common knowledge that' etc.)
26. Unsourced
27. No attribution

**Additional sources (Media Monitoring Form 2)**

**Labels used to refer to asylum seekers/refugees (Media Monitoring Form 3)**

**Who uses which labels? (Media Monitoring Form 4)**

**Reference to nationality of individual asylum seeker or group**

1. not mentioned
2. state nationality

**Images of asylum seekers/refugees  
(Media Monitoring Form 5)**

**O. Other Images (including graphics and footage)  
(Media Monitoring Form 5a)**

**P. Specific context of images of asylum seekers/refugees**

1. individual or group at point of entry or in transit
2. individual or group in settled context (i.e., in UK or EU)
3. Juxtaposition of an image of individual or group in another place with images of 'wealthy' Britain
4. Juxtaposition of an image of individual or group with UK citizens in settled context
5. individual or group in a domestic context
6. individual or group in a professional context (i.e., accessing services)
7. Individual or group 'being processed' by immigration/asylum system (e.g. queuing outside Lunar House, being deported etc.)
8. Other (explain)
9. Not applicable (no images of asylum seekers/refugees)

**Q. References to numbers of asylum seekers/refugees in unit**

1. quotation of an official statistic (i.e. UNHCR or Home Office)

2. quotation of a statistic by an official/politician with no reference to source  
(e.g. an official said 10, 000 asylum seekers arrived in June)
3. quotation of a statistic provided by an NGO/support group
4. quotation of a number suggested by a member of the public
5. quotation of a number but no source provided
6. no reference to numbers or statistics
7. other reference to number

**R. Reference to numbers by use of words in unit**

1. influx
2. wave
3. flood
4. other general term of exaggeration (write term)
5. no reference

**S. Asylum/refugee related themes (Media Monitoring Form 6)**

**T. Additional themes (Media Monitoring Form 7)**

**Language in the item towards asylum seekers and refugees by main source (e.g. commentators/interviewees)**

1. asylum seekers/ refugees as **bogus/false**
2. asylum seekers as **genuine/real/legal**
3. asylum seekers/refugees as **failed/rejected**
4. asylum seekers/refugees as a **burden** or **strain on resources**
5. asylum seekers/refugees as **scroungers, scum, robbing the system**
6. asylum seekers/refugees as **criminals/associated with criminal activity**
7. asylum seekers/refugees as **terrorists/associated with terrorist activity**
8. asylum seekers/refugees as **aliens/outside/invaders – desperate to come to UK**
9. asylum seekers/refugees receiving **preferential/better/favourable treatment** compared with British residents
10. asylum seekers/refugees as **beneficiaries of a system in crisis**
11. asylum seekers/refugees as a **threat** or something to be **feared/avoided**
12. asylum seekers/refugees **fleeing poverty, economic problems**
13. asylum seekers/refugees **fleeing human rights abuses, horror, oppression, torture, war**
14. asylum seekers/refugees as **educated/professional/skilled/contributors to the economy/society**
15. asylum seekers/ refugees as **victims of smugglers/traffickers**
16. asylum seekers/refugees as **victims of crime or racism**
17. asylum seekers/refugees as facing **poverty, deprivation, bad treatment in the UK**
18. asylum seekers/refugees to be offered **welcome, support, help**
19. asylum seekers as victims of the **UK asylum system, process, policy**
20. asylum issue/system referred to as **a problem**
21. asylum system referred to as **overburdened/under strain**
22. Asylum system referred to as **in crisis/chaos**
23. neutral reference to asylum seekers/refugees
24. other

25. Not applicable (ie no reference to asylum seekers/refugees)
26. Asylum seekers as **deserving of deportation**
27. Asylum seekers as **undeserving of deportation**.

**Language in the item towards asylum seekers and refugees by dominant voice (e.g. presenter/journalist)**

1. asylum seekers/ refugees as **bogus/false**
2. asylum seekers as **genuine/real/legal**
3. asylum seekers/refugees as **failed/rejected**
4. asylum seekers/refugees as a **burden or strain on resources**
5. asylum seekers/refugees as **scroungers, scum, robbing the system**
6. asylum seekers/refugees as **criminals/associated with criminal activity**
7. asylum seekers/refugees as **terrorists/associated with terrorist activity**
8. asylum seekers/refugees as **aliens/outside/invasers – desperate to come to UK**
9. asylum seekers/refugees receiving **preferential/better/favourable treatment** compared with British residents
10. Asylum seekers/refugees as **beneficiaries of a system in crisis**
11. asylum seekers/refugees as a **threat** or something to be **feared/avoided**
12. asylum seekers/refugees **fleeing poverty, economic problems**
13. asylum seekers/refugees **fleeing human rights abuses, horror, oppression, torture, war**
14. asylum seekers/refugees as **educated/professional/skilled/contributors to the economy/society**
15. asylum seekers/ refugees as **victims of smugglers/traffickers**
16. asylum seekers/refugees as **victims of crime or racism**
17. asylum seekers/refugees as facing **poverty, deprivation, bad treatment in the UK**
18. asylum seekers/refugees to be offered **welcome, support, help**
19. asylum seekers as victims of the **UK asylum system, process, policy**
20. asylum issue/system referred to as **a problem**
21. asylum system referred to as **overburdened/under strain**
22. Asylum system referred to as **in crisis/chaos**
23. neutral reference to asylum seekers/refugees
24. other
25. Not applicable (i.e. no reference to asylum seekers/refugees)
26. Asylum seekers as **deserving of deportation**
27. Asylum seekers as **undeserving of deportation**.

# Media Monitoring Form 1

Date Channel Item Coder Initials

Unit

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Brief summary of item:

--

A. Unit of analysis	
B. Position in running order	
C. Duration	
1. (seconds) _____	
2. (relative) _____	
D. Reference to asylum seekers/refugees	
E. Reference to immigration/immigrants	
F. What is the main theme of the unit?	
G. Speakers	
H. Local, national, international focus	
I. Main source	
<i>state which here:</i>	
J. Additional sources (Form 2)	
K. Labels (Form 3)	
L. Who uses labels? (Form 4)	
M. Reference to nationality	
N. Images (Form 5)	
O. Other images (Form 5a)	
P. Context of images	
Q. Reference to numbers of asylum seekers/refugees by use of figures	
<i>If 'other' state which:</i>	
R. Reference to numbers of asylum seekers/refugees by use of words	
<i>If 'other', state which:</i>	
S. Asylum/Refugee related themes (Form 6)	
T. Special Interest Themes (Form 7)	
U. Language towards asylum seekers/refugees by main source	
V. Language towards asylum seekers/refugees by dominant voice	

Is this an extreme case which we should revisit (i.e. uncharacteristically positive or extremely negative, deliberately provocative etc.)? Explain:

## Media Monitoring Form 2

Date	Channel	Item	Coder Initials
Unit			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### J. Additional Sources (NOT the main source)

Record below which sources are used in the article in addition to the main source.

SOURCE	TICK
1. Politician	
2. Central government official	
3. Local government official	
4. Home office/IND	
5. Immigration official	
6. Police	
7. NGO/voluntary sector	
8. Refugee NGO	
9. Refugee community organisation	
10. Pressure group (other: state which)	
11. Campaigner/supporter (not belonging to a specific organisation)	
12. Expert/academic	
13. Solicitor representing asylum seeker	
14. Other legal professional	
15. Other professional e.g. medical/teaching	
16. Resident/member of the public	
17. Refugee adult female	
18. Refugee adult male	
19. Refugee child (under 16)	
20. Publication (e.g. government report)	
21. Viewer	
22. Think Tank/Research Institute	
23. Media	
24. Other (name)	
25. Unspecified source	
26. No additional source	
27. Unsourced	
28. No attribution	



### Media Monitoring Form 3

Date	Channel	Item	Coder Initials
Unit			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

#### K. Which labels are used?

Record in the grid below the labels which are used in association with asylum seekers/refugees.

Label	Tick if used
Asylum seeker (s)	
Refugee (s)	
Illegal Immigrant (s)	
Illegal Migrant (s)	
Legal Immigrant (s)	
Legal Migrant (s)	
Economic Immigrant (s)	
Economic Migrant (s)	
Economic refugee (s)	
Would - be immigrant	
Would- be refugee	
Immigrant (s) or Migrant (s)	
Bogus asylum seeker (s)	
Failed/Rejected asylum seeker (s)	
Ethnic group/nationality	
Individual by name	
Other, explain	
Not applicable	

## L. Media monitoring form 4

Date	Channel	Item	Coder
Initials Unit			
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 20px; height: 20px;"></div> </div>			

Who uses which labels? Put tick(s) to show which source used which label(s).

Source?	Labels⇒	Asylum seeker(s)	Refugee(s)	Illegal Immigrant (s)	Illegal Migrant (s)	Economic Immigrant (s)	Economic Migrant (s)	Economic refugee (s)	Would - be - refugee	Would - be - immigrant	Immigrant (s) Or Migrant	Bogus asylum seeker (s)	Failed/ Rejected asylum seeker (s)	Ethnic group/ Nationality	Individual by name	Other
Politician																
Central gov. official																
Local gov. official																
Immigration official																
Police spokesperson																
NGO/voluntary sector																
Refugee NGO																
Refugee community																
Pressure group (other)																
Campaigner/supporter																
Expert/academic																
Solicitor representing an asylum seeker																
Other legal professional																
Other professional (medical, teaching etc)																
Resident /member of the public																
Refugee adult female																
Refugee child																
Publication																
Viewer																
Think tank /Research Inst.																
Media source (e.g. the Sun)																
Other																
Unspecified source																
Un sourced																
Not applicable																

Potential Sources listed in table:

Politician  
 Central gov. official  
 Local gov. official  
 Immigration official  
 Police spokesperson  
 NGO/voluntary sector  
 Refugee NGO  
 Refugee community  
 Pressure group (other)  
 Campaigner/supporter  
 Expert/academic  
 Solicitor representing an asylum seeker  
 Other legal professional  
 Other professional (medical, teaching etc)  
 Resident /member of the public  
 Refugee adult female  
 Refugee child  
 Publication

Viewer  
Think tank/Research Inst.  
Media source (e.g. the Sun)  
Other  
Unspecified source  
Unsourced  
Not applicable

*Potential labels listed in table:*

Asylum seeker(s)  
Refugee(s)  
Illegal Immigrant (s)  
Illegal Migrant (s)  
Economic Immigrant (s)  
Economic Migrant (s)  
Economic refugee (s)  
Would- be-refugee  
Would-be-immigrant  
Immigrant(s) or Migrant  
Bogus asylum seeker(s)  
Failed/Rejected asylum seeker(s)  
Ethnic group/ Nationality  
Individual by name  
Other

## Media Monitoring Form 5

Date	Channel	Item	Coder Initials
Unit			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

## N. Images

Image	TICK
Refugee individual who is the subject of the unit – male	
Refugee individual who is the subject of the unit - female	
Unidentified individual refugee male	
Unidentified individual refugee female	
Unidentified group of refugees male	
Unidentified group of refugees female	
Unidentified group of refugees mixed	
Gov. official/politician	
Resident/ordinary person(s) in UK	
NGO/refugee support group spokesperson	
Legal/medical/teaching professional	
Other (explain)	
No images of asylum seekers/refugees	

## Media Monitoring Form 5.a

### O. Other Images including graphics and contextualising footage

Image	FORMAT		DELIVERY		
	Graphic	Footage	Full screen	Studio backdrop	Other
Office work					
Border control work					
Law enforcement work					
Parliamentary work					
Memo/letter/email					
Passports					
Identity cards					
Lunar House					
Home Office buildings (other)					
Scotland Yard					
Law Courts					
Prison/detention centre					
Vehicles (Lorries/Boats/Other)					
Airport					
Port					
Caption					
Text					
Other image(s): state which					
No images					

## Media Monitoring Form 6

Date	Channel	Item	Coder Initials	
Unit				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### S. Asylum/Refugee related themes

Theme	TICK
cost/strain on services of asylum seekers/refugees	
Means of entry (e.g. as stowaways on lorry, channel tunnel etc.)	
numbers of asylum seekers/refugees	
announcement of government/party policy or change in legislation	
Accommodation	
Dispersal	
vouchers/benefit system	
The UK asylum system/process/policy in general	
Asylum seekers/refugees/immigrants as perpetrators of crime	
Asylum seekers/refugees/immigrants as terrorists/associated with terrorist activity/the threat of terrorism	
asylum seekers/refugees/immigrants as victims of crime	
asylum seekers/refugees/immigrants as victims of racial abuse/attack	
Detention	
Deportation	
why choose the UK?	
Education	
Health	
Employment	
refugee organisations –general	
refugee organisations – funding general	
funding from the lottery/community fund for refugee/asylum organisations	
reasons for refugees fleeing their country/reasons not to deport	
comparison between treatment of asylum seekers and British residents	
A welcoming or supportive initiative by local residents/local government etc.	
government/Labour spin on numbers of arrival/deportations etc.	
Closure of borders/ barriers	
Other (explain)	
Not applicable	

Date	Channel	Item	Coder Initials
Unit			

Reference to terrorism/national security/governance

'War on terror'	
London bombings 7/7	
Failed London attack 21/7	
September 11 <sup>th</sup> 2001	
Funding terrorism	
Other act defined as terrorism	
Preventing/fighting terrorism	
Anti-terrorism legislation/proposals/policy	
Anti-terrorism: police powers	
Serious organised crime agency (SOCA)	
Anti-terrorism: intelligence services	
Anti-terrorism: other (state which)	
Reference to al-Qaeda	
Crime	
Government in Crisis	
Human rights	

Multicultural Britain	
Reference to Muslims/Islam as 'moderate' /mainstream	
Reference to religious extremism/fanaticism	
Reference to religious group/organisation (state which)	
Links to Muslim political group/organisation (state which)	
Reference to Religious intolerance/Racism/Islamophobia	
Reference to religious tolerance	
Other reference to Islam/Muslims	
Reference to other religion(s) (explain)	

Deportation	
CCTV	
National Identity Card Scheme	
Identity card scheme (immigration/asylum specific)	
e-borders	
biometric data collection	
Detention centres	
Prison	
House arrest	
ASBO	
Electronic tagging	
Other	

